

Committee	Learning Teaching and Research		
Date paper prepared	08/05/2026	Date of committee meeting	03/06/2026
Subject	International - Erasmus Charter HE Application		
Author	Debbie Miller		
Action requested	I. For noting		
Purpose of the paper	To inform committee of the background to Erasmus funding and outline the opportunity with UHI NHW having applied for an Erasmus Charter (HE)		
Summary of the paper	Background and Purpose The Erasmus+ Programme is the European Union's flagship education, training, youth, and sport programme, providing funding to support international collaboration, student and staff mobility, work placements, apprenticeships, and partnership projects between educational institutions across Europe and beyond. For Scottish colleges and universities, Erasmus funding supports opportunities for learners and staff to study, train, teach, or undertake professional development overseas, while also enabling institutions to build long-term international partnerships, collaborative curriculum initiatives, research and innovation projects, and cultural exchange activity. The programme is widely regarded as providing a more stable and reciprocal framework for international educational collaboration than the post-Brexit Turing Scheme, as it supports both outward and inward mobility and encourages sustained strategic partnerships between institutions. Members may be aware that Scotland cannot independently rejoin Erasmus while it remains part of the UK constitutional framework, as participation is negotiated at UK Government level with the European Union. However, there has been significant political and sector-wide pressure from Scotland to restore participation in the Erasmus+ Programme since Brexit. As of 2026, the UK Government has now formally agreed with the EU to rejoin Erasmus+ from January 2027, meaning Scottish colleges, universities, schools, and youth organisations are expected to regain access to the programme for the 2027/28 academic year. .		

Consultation	Internal consultation with UHI partners to discuss whether a UHI EO application was to be taken forward. Discussion also with ELT on the opportunity and through our new internal International group.
Resource implications	The resource required to support further Erasmus applications is to be determined and indicative indications will be mapped out in autumn 2026 in anticipation of a successful charter application. There is current interest from two other UHI academic partners in engaging with UHI NWH should our application be successful. At the time of writing the meeting with partners are still to take place.
Risk implications	Without a successful application for an Erasmus Charter, we will not be able to participate in applications to support Erasmus HE funding for mobility, partnership and other activity. Equally we need to ensure if are successful in our application that we have both the capability and capacity to follow up in further applications for funding which will both support. The benefits of engaging in this activity are well documented in terms of enhancing our international capability and expanding opportunities for learners and staff
Link with strategy	This opportunity links to several areas of the UHI Strategic Plan 2030, given the desire to increase our reach across curriculum and research and have international reach.
<u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion</u>	Ensuring our documents can be read and understood by everyone, including people with disabilities or impairments, is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010.
Island Community Impact	Not required in this instance. See the Island communities impact assessments: guidance and toolkit - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) • There is no barrier to staff or students engaging in Erasmus activity whether mainland or island.

Paper status	☒ Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. ☐ Restricted – The paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. ☐ Confidential - The paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. Some information is considered commercially sensitive. [Please note papers may still be subject to Freedom of Information requests – see below].
Freedom of information	Choose an item. FOISA exemptions Scottish Information Commissioner (itspublicknowledge.info) If closed/ withheld, select date this will become 'open': Enter a date.

International - Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)**Background**

Following the UK's departure from the European Union, participation in the Erasmus+ Programme largely ceased for UK educational institutions and was replaced by the Turing Scheme in 2020. While the Turing Scheme created opportunities for outward student mobility, it did not replicate the broader reciprocal partnership model previously available through Erasmus and was not taken up by UHI partners as it was not fit for purpose. Issues cited with the Turing approach included short-term funding cycles, annual competitive bidding processes, limited strategic continuity, and the absence of inward mobility opportunities for students and staff.

In December 2025, the UK government announced an agreement to rejoin Erasmus+, with participation due to resume from January 2027. In recognition of the significant benefits associated with Erasmus participation, UHI North, West and Hebrides has submitted an application for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) for the 2027/28 programme cycle. A decision on the application is expected in September 2026.

The ECHE is a prerequisite for any institution delivering higher education provision that wishes to apply for Erasmus+ higher education funding. This applies to both mobility and partnership activity. Institutions applying solely for Erasmus+ school education or vocational education and training (VET) funding are not required to hold the Charter.

Opportunity for UHI NWH

Securing the Charter would provide UHI North, West and Hebrides with access to a well-established and internationally recognised framework for educational collaboration, learner and staff mobility, and strategic international partnership development. The Charter would support opportunities for student exchanges, work placements, apprenticeships, staff teaching and training visits, and collaborative curriculum and innovation projects with European partners.

The benefits for learners and staff engaging in Erasmus are significant and include enhanced international experience, employability, cultural awareness, professional development, and knowledge exchange. For the institution, Erasmus participation would strengthen international partnerships, support curriculum enhancement, and align closely with wider strategic priorities around inclusion, sustainability, regional development, skills, and internationalisation.

There may be opportunities for UHI North, West and Hebrides to support wider engagement across the University of the Highlands and Islands partnership. This could include sharing expertise and guidance on Erasmus processes and compliance requirements, supporting collaborative partnership development, and exploring coordinated mobility or thematic projects aligned to shared regional priorities.

The next stage following any successful Charter award would involve preparing and submitting applications for specific Erasmus+ mobility funding opportunities. This would include funding applications for learner and staff mobility activity, as well as exploration of wider Erasmus partnership and innovation opportunities. Internally, further work would also be required to establish governance arrangements, operational processes, institutional priorities, and adequate resource to ensure effective delivery and compliance with Erasmus standards.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall, successful participation in Erasmus would represent an important strategic opportunity for UHI North, West and Hebrides and would support our ambition to strengthen international collaboration and provide enhanced opportunities for learners, staff, and regional partners.

The timeline is therefore broadly:

- **2026** – Institutions apply for Erasmus Charters and prepare partnerships and governance arrangements.
- **September 2026** – Expected outcomes for ECHE applications.
- **January 2027** – UK participation in Erasmus+ expected to formally recommence.
- **2027 onwards** – Institutions can begin applying for Erasmus mobility funding, partnership projects, staff exchanges, student exchanges, apprenticeships, and wider collaborative initiatives.

This development is widely viewed across the sector as a major opportunity to restore more stable and reciprocal international collaboration than was available through the Turing Scheme. In developing this opportunity, we acknowledge support from Colleges Scotland and British Council, with the latter being the UK National Agency to support Erasmus.