

Committee	UHI North, West and Hebrides: Learning, Teaching and Research Committee
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	13/11/2025
Date of Board / Committee meeting	??/??/2025 Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee
Author	Scarlett Fox, Local Coordinator, 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

NWH updates

We currently have 35 SVRs (the UHI-wide figures are later in this report), with 37% trained and good attendance at our October and November meetings (with 34% attendance in November). As explained below, we are theming our SVR meetings, but NWH-specific feedback so far, which we are taking up in relevant curriculum areas, includes:

- Positive feedback on the induction process, comprehensive and plenty of information delivered to students
- Students having issues with funding, bursaries, etc. No reminder emails being sent like in previous years, all communications being sent to the student HUB with no update on this given to students. One student received 12 reminders to their student hub, with no other attempt to contact them.
- Students in rural centres feel overlooked in regard to support, not having as many in person support systems as larger campuses, e.g. funding.
- Request for student kitchen facilities on the Stornoway campus.

The graduation ceremonies at Fort William, Stornoway, and Thurso were attended by their respective officer. All officers gave a speech during the ceremony that was well received by those in attendance.

- Cole – Working on events and engagement at the Thurso campus, hosting games afternoons every other week. He has also been working with the student engagement team to find funding to continue the free breakfasts on offer across North, West and Hebrides.
- Abigail – Set up informal drop in sessions once a week to listen to student feedback and issues, that she helps to action alongside the student engagement team. She has also been working on increased visibility on the Fort William campus, as well as developing ideas for increasing our visibility with online students.
- Alasdair – Working on our continuing SVR recruitment across North, West and Hebrides, as well as helping students with the funding issues that have arisen this year. He is also working to increase our visible presence on the Stornoway campus.

General headlines

- Our Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Burn, is sadly leaving HISA. The recruitment process is underway.
- HISA has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, with [some reminiscences from past officers](#).



- We now have [a full Executive Committee](#) (our final vacancy was open for nominations at the time of the last QAEC).
- HISA's [monthly newsletter, Hi!](#), continues to receive very high hit rates and is commended to staff across UHI as a good way of keeping up with our activities.
- We are currently analysing data from a research phase of our [Board of Management project](#) in which we have explored and developed effective student engagement in governance spaces across UHI.
- [Our engagement in multiple dimensions of UHI Transformation](#) continues, supporting responses to the student survey which are now into the hundreds.
- HISA officers and staff have shared innovative practice over recent weeks in a range of national and international forums, including at the [RAISE network's 2025 conference](#) and [in its latest journal issue](#), at a [Flemish HE sector project on student participation](#), and at the [2025 Student Voice Australasia symposium](#).

Students at the heart of decision making at UHI

Work has completed with the evaluation of the Board of Management Project, and HISA thanks all Board representatives who were involved in this process. A report is being written up and circulated within HISA's internal governance before making its way to AP boards.

Recruitment of SVRs continues overall to be higher week by week than last academic year. The following tables show our breakdown of SVR numbers by AP and CSG as of 4th November.

Academic Partner/centre	SVRs	Cognate Subject Group	SVRs
Argyll	15	BLCE	158
CRHS	1	ECBE	46
HTC	4	Education	36
Inverness	103	HASSG	57
Moray	114	HSCLS	134
North, West and Hebrides	39	LMS	25
Orkney	2	Not known	30
Perth	184	Total	486
SAMS	16		
Shetland	8		
Total	486		

Our plan to use the [sparks Student Learning Experience](#) building blocks to shape our engagements with SVRs this academic year is underway. In October, where we held two cross-campus SVR meetings partly to minimise capacity strain for our local teams at a busy time of year, we explored induction through the prism of the Progression and Achievement building block. November's meetings have explored community and belonging within courses. We will be publishing reports on these thematic outcomes in due course.

We have been closely involved in various quality activities at the UHI level including SEAP preparation and various STEP projects, plus a range of committees, working groups and projects across the university.

UHI Transformation represents a significant priority for us, including gathering feedback from SVRs, promoting the student survey on Transformation, and engaging in governance spaces at all levels.



Student communities and inclusion

We currently have 51 clubs and societies and 7 networks, including 17 online and open to students UHI-Wide. We had 17 applications to our first-term grant round; funded activity includes equipment maintenance, safety training, support for trips to conferences, championships, conventions, various art materials, performer and speaker fees, subscriptions, and more. The Pride Network remains the most active with over 50 members.

Without funding for a sports coordinator, we have had to step-back from sporting development; however, we still maintain the membership to BUCs and Scottish Student Sport to allow students to compete in sports provided they follow the registration guidelines.

We have rolled out two compulsory committee trainings for on risk assessments and committee roles, and are trialling a Health and Safety Certification process for high-risk clubs.

With thanks to UHI Inverness, we recently celebrated [the awarding of the HISA Award for Outstanding Club to the UHI Scribblers](#), a cross-campus creative writing society based around the new online degree in creative writing.

Our EDI work this term has been focused so far on building a new committee, working with UHI on trans rights and the implications of the UK Supreme Court Decision, celebrating Black History Month, and preparing communications for Trans Awareness Week and Day of Remembrance, 16 Days of Action, and International Day of People with Disabilities. With the squeeze on resources, staffing, and capacity across UHI, we hope that UHI and its partners will remain committed to upholding the principals of equality, diversity, and inclusion for their student population. We see an increasing numbers of students from marginalised communities feeling isolated and worried about how their peers and college staff will treat them and what support might be offered to them. Our new gender-expression fund for trans and non-binary students provides up to £100 for gender affirming products or transport to gender-affirming appointments, recognizing the additional financial burden these students face.

Support and facilities for all students

From July to September 2025, the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) Advice Service supported 46 students across the UHI partnership, showing a clear rise in engagement compared to previous years. Case openings peaked at 19 in August, suggesting increased visibility of the service or greater student need during the summer break. Academic-related concerns remained the most common issue, with seven complaints cases recorded. Housing support (16 cases) also featured prominently, marking it as an emerging area of concern. Other case types included disciplinary, admissions, and academic conduct matters.

Analysis of recorded work shows that housing issues accounted for 31% of total Advice Service case time, followed by student code of conduct (19%) and academic misconduct (17%), underlining the complex and formal nature of student support needs. Inverness UHI saw the highest activity levels, followed by Moray UHI and Executive Office.

Beyond casework, the Advice Service contributed to the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure review, the Support for Study Policy review, and provided local support during the UHI Moray halls closure. Overall, this quarter reflects strong and growing engagement with the service and its ongoing impact on improving the student experience.

Finally, in our communications, we have consolidated our instagram accounts down to a central @teamhisa. As part of this consolidation, we have been working more closely with both UHI Comms and AP comms teams.