

How do we recruit young people?

Introduction

UHI North, West and Hebrides (NWH) provides a wide choice of subjects available for young people to study from where they live, but how do they know? The college currently uses numerous ways to recruit students and to **grow our student enrolments**, not least via our website, through marketing and directly by our staff. This paper presents our two key, interlinked recruitment assets, their risks, limitations and challenges. Whilst the focus is on young people and those leaving school, the question and paper is applicable to all people (potential students) from here and across the globe.

Current key risks

- Curtailed ability to grow student numbers, particularly RUK and international.
- Student applicants that go elsewhere.
- Local connection is limited.

Main student recruitment methods

The website must be the go-to-source for accurate up-to-date information about subjects, fees, course content and mode of delivery. The website's main purpose is to recruit students. The portfolio of subjects and courses on the website must be easy to find and well described. It showcases our curriculum portfolio to applicants, current students, NWH staff, school guidance teachers, parents, employers and multiple stakeholders.

Engagement leads are our biggest tangible asset in recruiting students. The college is **uniquely advantaged** by having a person, the face of the college, anchored within communities and rooted in local context.

Website strengths

- Strong branding and UHI identity with the same navigation across all partner sites.
- NWH school badge web pages for senior phase courses (mainly taught as part of school column choices).

Website and related constraints

- UHI own the website, therefore NWH and partners have limited ability to improve functionality/fundamental changes need to be agreed partnership wide (e.g. course layout);
- Limited, clunky course A-Z search tool, which is driven by data in SITS (student information system)
- Can be confusing for new HE students or international students about where to study;
- Application process can be off-putting due to confusing, lengthy application form;
- NWH can only influence change on HE content of programmes led by NWH;
- Some course descriptions are uninspiring, confusing terminology, and a few are inadequate;
- Poor visibility and limited navigation for short courses.
- Restricted admissions functionality (digital) linked to the website and potential additional UHI processing requirement. This is coupled with a limited admissions staffing resource.

Local engagement leads

Our local Engagement leads are vital because they provide a personal connection between people in their communities and the college and are an important channel for marketing and communication. Engagement leads play a major part in student recruitment.
(see next page for strengths and constraints)

Engagement strengths

- direct school recruitment (school liaison lead at a local level, providing an interface with young people, guidance teachers and parents);
- attend school events and other local events;
- form strong relationship with head teachers, guidance teachers, DYW and agencies;
- host events at local centre;
- provide localised marketing and contextual social media campaigns.

Engagement constraints

- rely on the website and interlinked systems for accurate information;
- enquiry and application handling system;
- conflicting priorities of other work and time;
- uncertainty of roles post-merger.

Proposed next steps

Action is required to enable growth in student recruitment and enrolment. The proposed solutions and next steps are outlined below:

Challenge	Solution and next steps
Website is limited	Continue to call for improvements and to make recommendation to UHI. Introduce qualification maps and toolkits for each curriculum area. Ensure systematic updating. Commit to UHI transformation work related to student growth and integrated curriculum.
Conversion of applications to offer	Lessons learned task group to recommend actions for improvement.
Engagement team working arrangements and focus	Acknowledge and clarify role, strengthen lines of communication and systems that support their work
Enquiry handling system is not yet fully developed	Autumn review and development of a systematic enquiry handling system for engagement staff

Changes to recruitment related activity, roles and other related student experience work will require an equality impact assessment and island community impact assessment.

Please note

Further information (only 2 pages) is in the reading room “*LTR_Student-Recruitment_further_info*” and covers

- who is responsible for student recruitment;
- integral work-link between engagement leads and marketing;
- current marketing work schedule.