

NWH Learning, Teaching & Research Committee Meeting

Chair – Willie Macdonald

Wednesday 10th September 2025, 16:15 - 18:00 via MS Teams

Present

Alasdair Macleod, HISA Student Member

Derek Lewis, Chairman of the Board of Management

Diana MacLeod, Head of Curriculum & Student Services

Ellen Campbell, Board

Fiona Grant, Director of Curriculum & Student Experience

Fiona Hamilton, Head of Student Experience

Hannah Ritchie-Muir, Vice Principal Academic

Lydia Rohmer, Principal & Chief Executive

Michael Foxley, Independent Board Member

Rupert Marshall, Independent Non-Executive Board Member

Shaun Escott, Teaching staff member

Stuart Gibb, Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange

Tracy Kerr, Head of Performance and Planning

William Macdonald, Interim LT&R Chair & Vice Chair Board of Management (WM)

Apologies

Debbie Miller

Quorum, Welcome and Apologies (WM)

The meeting was quorate

2. Declarations of Interest and Connection (WM)

None

3. Minutes 11th June 2025 (WM)

Approved

Update from June 2025 – The Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) had not yet been approved by Bord na Gaidhlig (BNG). The draft had been finalised by UHI NWH, with the requested three new inclusions and would go back to BNG for approval. UHI NWH would then have to await approval from BNG based on their timelines and Board cycle.

4. Request to star unstarred agenda items (WM)

11. * Student carers policy – Fiona Hamilton (FH) for Anne Maree Dykes

This policy detailed reasonable adjustments for students with caring responsibilities. Students who disclosed their needs would be assigned learning support worker. Absences for hospital appointments etc would be supported. There was also a support group in place for students to support one another.

The Chair and Committee thanked FH for the highly commendable policy.

Endorsed

6. R&KE quarterly report March-Macy 2025 – Prof Stuart Gibb (SG)

The quarterly report had been circulated throughout the NWH Committees. The next quarterly report would be presented in a new format which would include dashboards and KPIs. There would be an update of activity against research themes and detailed information showing the range and diversity of research taken across UHI NWH.

The Chair thanked SG for the very informative paper. Rupert Marshall (RM) asked for listing of where centres were based geographically that were doing well. Michael Foxley (MF) supported the request.

Noted

6.1 R&KE scholarship – research REF guide

Universities in Scotland must undertake research. The aim of this paper was to distinguish between the terminologies of research scholarships. The final guidance on definitions and criteria for REF had been delayed again. A REF working group was in the process of being set up.

RM asked how the progressions from scholarship to advanced scholarship related to academic title. How were the arts and humanities dealt with?

SG explained that the broad definitions were used within UHI more widely, without hard boundaries. HRM added that the academic staff contract was agreed nationally, research was a duty remitted from teaching. The outline of the role had the scope for staff to engage in research as part of their professional expertise. An advanced scholarship would include a specific remission. REF would likely be a funded project. NWH were looking at how to build this in as a development progression for teaching staff. REF met a certain set of criteria. Other valuable research may be regionally confined, which would not qualify for REF. The guide was evolving.

Noted

6.2 R&KE – Preparing for REF 2029 – Strategic options and opportunities for UHI NWH

This paper gave an overview of the excellence framework and what it meant to UHI NWH as a college. Information was contained relating to investment and possible risks involved. The scoring used to qualify REF paper submissions was included. SG highlighted the recommendation at the bottom of page seven, for which he sought endorsement from this Committee, which was qualified based on the optimal opportunities available to NWH at this time.

The Chair commended SG for his hugely informative paper.

Endorsed

5. HISA Report – Alasdair Macleod

There were students representing each of the North, West and Hebrides areas, all had attended initial training in Perth.

Fiona Grant (FG) advised of Learner developers who she could share contacts for with the HISA representatives. Student Voice representatives were also being recruited.

The Principal welcomed Alasdair, adding that she was looking forward to all student electees, Committees and Board members working together.

Noted

7. Scottish education and exchange programme (SEEP) – Debbie Miller (DM) – not present

The Principal informed that this was the Scottish version to replace the Erasmus project after Brexit 2023. The college had been successful in achieving approval through SEEP. It was a reminder to the Committee of the loss of European funding previously available to colleges. There was a UK programme (Turing) which was also available for funding.

Noted

8. Curriculum and student experience performance report Hannah Ritchie Muir (HRM), Fiona Grant (FG), Fiona Hamilton (FH) and Tracy Kerr (TK) (1717 TK joined)

There had been an increased number of applications, NWH were on track to achieve targets. The active applications for FE & HE were up based on same time period compared to last year. There were one or two key areas for hi-light, there had been a lower demand in maritime and adventure tourism management courses, which had been flagged. Other adventure programmes had increased. There had been a huge increase demand for Highers for example maths, for allied health professionals and health & social care professionals.

SQA exam results had decreased from a success point of view, and the team were looking to create a plan. The figures included students who withdrew early and did not actually sit their exams, therefore causing an untrue reflection. The attainment was very good for those who sat their exams. NAT4 had been introduced last year, allowing student to follow on into NAT 5 and so on, this initiative had started to be apparent in the numbers being received.

College leaver destinations showed how students were progressing, NWH retain 61.45% of students. The number of students going into employment was also high. The next report would have more exacting numbers.

1734 Derek Lewis (DL) joined the meeting.

MF congratulated all involved in producing this very positive report. He added that the UHI website limitations still needed to be addressed. This was seen as a significant constraint as was marketing. MF advised further that the offshore wind projects would require a lot of maritime courses. The team would be reviewing maritime courses alongside Shetland and partnership (business) input.

The Principal noted that KPIs would develop bench marking against other institutions. There had been excellent results in for NAT5, higher and advanced higher attainment, Gaelic courses had been included in the stats provided. SE informed the Committee that the local centre had opened at weekends to assist students in attaining positive results for their assignments, even though most of the science course could be run online.

The Chair thanked the team for all the work within the report and appreciated the timely submission of the reports for this meeting.

Noted

1743 TK left

9. Student recruitment – Fiona Grant (FG)

FG reported that there were UHI website constraints. Local engagement leads were important especially with high schools to meet with students and parents, who were then navigating an ineffectual website.

Suggested solutions were to pressure UHI to upgrade the website. There was a small team in admissions which was being addressed, there was a need for a fully formed enquiry handling system

The Chair agreed local engagement officers were key to recruitment.

Noted

10. Curriculum development and delivery – Debbie Miller (DM) not present

Noted

12. *Committee terms of reference

Key focus points should be taken forward at each meeting. It was recognised that it was important that this Committee support the curriculum team from a strategic perspective. The TofR would remain unchanged for the period 2025/26.

TofR endorsed

13. *Committee workplan

The Committee members were invited to suggest any additions to the Chair.

Noted

14. A.O.B.

The Principal advised that NWH had three short listings for the college CDN awards, For Peats sake (Peatland restoration,) Digital student ambassadors and college student of the year – Adam Hutchison NC in music, who overcame significant challenges to achieve his accreditation.

The Chair expressed congratulations from the Committee.

<https://www.cdn.ac.uk/college-awards-2025/>

Meeting closed at 1800