



# Meeting Minutes

Meeting	Trustee Board	X
	Management Board	
	Executive Committee	
	Finance & Commercial Development	
	Appointments & Remuneration	
	Compliance, Governance & Risk	
	Other:	

Meeting Date	27 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Meeting Time	10:00-13:00
<b>Attendance</b>	
Present	<p>William Campbell (President (Chair))            Rachel Burn (Chief Executive Officer)            Janet Hackel (External Trustee)            Neil Stewart (External Trustee)            Edward Abbott-Halpin (External Trustee)            Carly-Skye Fraser (Student Trustee)            Ahren Armstrong (Student Trustee)            Wendy Day (Director of Finance and Operations)            Simon Varwell (Director of Student Engagement and Representation)            Emma Miller (Community Engagement Manager)            Hannah Laycock (Operations and Governance Coordinator) (minute taking 'Normal Business')            Xander McDade (President Elect)            Holly Pearce (Vice President Elect)</p>
Apologies	<p>Irene Hynd (External Trustee)            Iain Morrison (External Trustee)</p>
Non-Attendance	David Leslie (Student Trustee)

## SECTION A: RESERVED BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Do Not Join

Section	Minutes
<b>1. Welcome and Meeting Management</b>	
1.1 Apologies	Apologies were received from IH and IM.
1.2 Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations of interest to declare.
1.3 Minutes from 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-01]  <b>DECISIONS:</b>            Minutes from 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were <b>approved</b>.</p>

1.4 Action Log from 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-02]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Engagement &amp; Representation: Advice Service Reciprocal Agreement with University of Strathclyde (UofS) Student Union</b> SV noted that a key member of staff was leaving UofS SU, and therefore there was a delay with moving this forward.</li> <li>• <b>Any Other Competent Business: Disclosure Request</b> There is ongoing discussion regarding new legislation requirements for PVGs.</li> </ul> <p><b>DECISIONS:</b> Actions of the previous meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were <b>approved</b> as read.</p>
<b>2. RESERVED BUSINESS</b>	
2.1 HISA Financial Position 2025/26 and Budget / Block Grant Update	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-03]</p> <p>No minutes were taken.</p> <p>EAH gave his apologies and left the meeting at the end of this item.</p>
<b>SECTION B: NORMAL BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Join</b>	
<b>3. Opportunities</b>	
3.1 Welcome to new Trustees	<p>WC welcomed Elect President, XD, Vice President Education, HP, and Student Trustee, AA to the Board. Board members individually introduced themselves to the new members, and new members introduced themselves to Board.</p>
3.2 Support for our Vice President- Education	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-04]</p> <p>Details of best practice to support HP were there for Board to reference, and were also encouraged to speak with HP should they have further questions.</p> <p>WC noted thanks to UHI Court for their support to HP, which was already significantly enhanced compared to previous experiences.</p>
3.3 Chair's Report	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-05]</p> <p>WC summarised key reflections from his report and gave thanks to the dedication and support of the organisation whilst in post. The organisation was in a difficult place in terms of culture and representation at the time of him taking up his tenure but the situation is now improved, and relationships have been strengthened with UHI Academic Partners, with more work underway.</p> <p>WC highlighted his impact on and changes in his time in office which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are at the heart of decision making</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage building resilience for officers to say no and be appropriately critical with the University</li> <li>• The new Directorate team in place has hugely helped to support in building positive relationships with UHI</li> <li>• It has been eye opening for him working with HISA and the students of UHI in understanding the complexities of the Partnership</li> <li>• The President role has been all consuming at times, and has at times taken away from key objectives of being on the ground with students</li> <li>• Change has felt slow at times due to legacy issues</li> <li>• Student Partnership Agreement has been a positive project to be part of</li> <li>• Student Mental Health Agreement signed and commitment from UHI was a big achievement and has enhanced conversations</li> <li>• OBI Awards were a big success this year, and is an achievement of HISA, local Perth team, to be able to get the First Minister to attend and speak so highly of UHI Perth, especially with the times they were going through and to speak directly about the support of UHI Perth.</li> <li>• Taking HISA Awards back into HISA but with ongoing appreciated support from UHI staff</li> <li>• Subject Interns funding has been a positive win to support curriculum</li> </ul> <p><b>Areas for future focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HISA structure and officer structure</li> <li>• Commercial development and external engagement. Reputation needs to be looked at. The new media pack will help with this.</li> <li>• Good Governance Review – a lot has changed in a decade with HISA, UHI and the sector in general. Strong governing documents are needed for the organisation and as a charity.</li> <li>• WC will continue to be an ambassador for HISA</li> </ul>
<b>4. CEO Update</b>	
4.1 CEO Report	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-06]</p> <p>RB took the paper as read and highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of work going into HR processes with recent changes to staffing. There was good progress in terms of local recruitment of staff.</li> <li>• Bòrd na Gàidhlig have advised that HISA were unsuccessful for funding again. This is a priority for XM, and will have discussions with RB to look at how this is brought forward to Bòrd and SMO to demonstrate the need to be independently funded. DJ McIntyre has been a great representative of HISA in his support.</li> </ul> <p>WC responded that he was deeply disappointed about Bòrd na Gàidhlig's funding decision. This was the third year of applying and to have the same</p>

	<p>response. Cause for HISA to write or meet with the Chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig to make a representation on behalf of the organisation.</p>
<p><b>5. Directorate Updates</b></p>	
<p>5.1 Student Engagement &amp; Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update</li> <li>• HISA's 2025 Student Elections Report</li> <li>• Student Officer Resignation Protocol</li> </ul>	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-07a, HTB0625-07b, HTB0625-07c]</p> <p>SV took the papers as read, and highlighted key points for the following papers.</p> <p><b>HISA's 2025 Student Elections Report</b></p> <p>The report has been drafted to demonstrate that HISA had run a free and fair set of elections and provide a summary to UHI. The report details the end to end process for our officer elections in the spring of 2025. Paul Stalker, Insight and Democracy Coordinator, was appointed last year to refresh the Governance documentation and procedures. There had been several changes visibly and behind the scenes, such as single sign on for the website. Candidacy was up this year and our support package for candidates strengthened. We also increased turnout, although this is still not as high as we would like. There are still issues with student data, which is not accurate, but that aside there was progress in terms of engagement on the ground, and turnout increase.</p> <p>WC noted thanks to the work SV had around the Deputy Returning Officer. WC noted that the report highlights all things we have changed in a positive way, and where we still need to go. Although the turnout was higher, it is still significantly lower than the sector. WC did not use the term lightly and was a contentious point. However, the single sign-on was a huge step forward.</p> <p>AA noted that it was a positive move to have the single sign-on. He queried the numbers on the candidates, and whether we were losing people as it appears to be a big drop from those initially standing to those finally submitting a candidate brochure. SV responded that it came down to 1 to 1 conversations with prospective candidates and helping them to understand the roles better and then subsequently dropping out or finding other ways to support student voice.</p> <p>XM noted that there was not the same options for students to be involved with HISA at different levels, which could be reasons as to why engagement was significantly lower compared to other SUs. XM is looking to explore local voluntary executives again this Academic Year who work with paid officers at APs and could help to build interest and a pipeline to stand as a Student Officer. It was key to make it not too onerous to be a REP or student officer. SV agreed it would be good for the elections, and should</p>

	<p>form wider considerations for the democracy review. Resourcing was also something to consider allowing people to step up.</p> <p>AA queried whether there was a process in terms of understanding how or why people dropped out. Plan in place to improve this number for future elections. SV responded that it was anecdotal evidence and individual circumstances, and people understanding more about the responsibilities, and realising it is not for them, or that their studies are not continuing. Learned a lot from survey of candidates, and will feed into next elections cycle.</p> <p><b>Student Officer Resignation Protocol</b> SV summarised that this new protocol document was in response to circumstances in which people had resigned within the past year, and relevant staff members were not advised at the right time or in the right order. The document outlines a democratic process with an HR implication.</p> <p>WC responded that given the implications and the Education Act, this led to the paper being brought to Board as it could impact on the legislation duties of the Trustee Board and have strategic impact.</p>
<p>5.2 Community Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update</li> <li>• Gender Expression Fund</li> <li>• Comms Consultation Report</li> </ul>	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-08a, HTB0625-08b, HTB0625-08c] EM took the papers as read.</p> <p><b>Update</b> EM noted that there had been additional pressure within the team due to staff changes with the announcement of the departure of the Sports Development Coordinator (SDC), Amanda Fleet, who is taking up a new role with Special Olympics. This was a very difficult decision for AF and they have agreed to continue to support HISA for five hours per week since there is no one else in the organisation who specialises in Sport. Discussions had been taking place as to how the team will manage this change.</p> <p>In the interim time period, Community will receive additional support from other staff.</p> <p>There were ongoing conversations with Active Campus Coordinators, as to how we work with them as we do not now have resources to manage them to manage clubs.</p> <p>RB to steer EDI for a while to help support the team. Insight and Democracy Coordinator, Paul Stalker to take over MSL data.</p> <p>Work had taken place regarding the UK Supreme Court ruling that “sex” is now defined as biological birth sex, regardless of gender transition or legal</p>

gender recognition. HISA has submitted a response to the EHRC consultation taking into account the views of our trans students. A summarised version of HISA's position had been submitted to all UHI Principals, and UHI EDI Committee.

#### **Comms Consultation Report**

EM summarised the paper and highlighted key points:

- Consultation with staff and officers
- Developing ways for students to find what is relevant to them
- Utilising email by targeted emails
- Process for developing better support for staff members

WC noted that the Comms consultation was a good exercise.

AA queried whether there was a policy or plan in place for when key staff members leave a department, which then highly impacts the team. RB noted that this was a single point of failure, but that this is a fundamental problem of a small organisation with a large geographical spread. EM noted that the Comms team now have an additional team member in place, as Digital Content Coordinator

#### **Gender Expression Fund**

EM summarised that the fund was for gender affirming products, which is important for those transitioning. The aim is for HISA to fund part of the fund and then for UHI to contribute as well as seek external donations. It is particularly important to bring this forward now in light of the Supreme Court ruling and how vulnerable trans students are feeling.

AA queried how it would be funded long-term; annually or for a specific time. EM responded that they would be looking at the department's underspend, ideally there would be funds available from charities etc. LGBTQA+ charities in the Highlands. RB responded that funds could be used from unused external Mental Health funds, since this is a mental health initiative, at least in the first year.

AA queried how the funds would be prioritised. WC responded that this discussion needed to be delegated to the Senior Leadership team to decide. EM noted that there were examples of pots of money used at other Unions for this type of fund throughout the year. EM suggested dividing the funds at £500 for the first and second term, and first come first serve, with no judgements, and rather eligibility criteria.

#### **ACTIONS:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EM and RB to meet w/c 30<sup>th</sup> June to discuss the leftover money from the Mental Health fund and take forward.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Sub-Committee</b>	
6.1 Finance and Commercial Development	There were no updates. The latest minutes were included in the For Information section for reference.
6.2 Appointments and Remuneration Summary	There were no updates
6.3 Compliance, Governance and Risk Summary	There were no updates. The latest minutes were included in the For Information section for reference.
<b>7. Governance</b>	
7.1 HISA Freedom of Speech Policy	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-09]</p> <p>WC summarised that the policy sets out how HISA will take reasonable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law for student members and external speakers. The aim being that people feel enabled to participate fully, question, challenge and share new ideas all without discrimination.</p> <p>The policy came to Board at the last meeting, and they agreed for it to be brought to Executive Committee, who highlighted a couple of changes. The policy was originally part of the Schedules and was removed as a separate policy.</p> <p>AA queried how students will know how to report a concern under this policy. WC responded that the end of the policy details the procedure for this which is the same as HISA complaints policy.</p> <p>AA queried if officers would receive any basic training to handle Freedom of Speech disputes fairly, if needed. WC noted that the Leadership team would need to work with Development Managers to work this into the officer training. RB noted that if anything particularly difficult came up Senior Leadership team would take over, if wanted or needed, and UHI would support the team too.</p>
7.2 Risk Register Update	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-10]</p> <p>RB summarised the paper and provided context for the new members and noted that work had been done to consolidate the register into main risks, which are reviewed regularly. HISA's Finance risk was made red earlier this year in light of UHI and HISA's financial positions.</p>

7.3 Appointment of Returning Officer and DRO 25/26	<p>WC noted to Board that there was a statutory requirement for the organisation to appoint a Returning Officer (RO), and Deputy Returning Officer (DPO) each year. For the new Academic Year this would be National Union of Students (NUS) as RO, and Simon Varwell as DPO for another term.</p> <p><b>DECISIONS:</b> Board approved the appointments of the RO and DRO for another term.</p>
<b>8. Any Other Competent Business</b>	
8.1 One in-person Board Meeting for 2025	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-11]</p> <p>RB noted that having a meeting in person would be a nice thing to do in person and perhaps for Spring 2026.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board to put forward any preferential dates they might have for the in-person meeting in Spring 2026.</li> </ul>
8.2 2025/26 Schedule of Proposed Trustee Board and Sub-Committee Dates	<p>[Paper: HTB0625-12]</p> <p><b>DECISIONS:</b> Board approved the scheduled Board and Sub-Committee dates for 2026.</p>
8.3 Acknowledgements	<p>On behalf of Trustee Board, NS gave huge thanks to WC for his hard work over the past two years. WC will be leaving the organisation in an immeasurably stronger place. He led from the front and in the recruitment of RB as the new CEO, chairing the Executive Committee, and Trustee Board and consistently representing the student voice with clarity and conviction. He brought value to HISA and across UHI over and above his role.</p> <p>WC stood up for students campaigning on course and funding cuts. He also focussed on wellbeing, mental health and inclusion. WC has been a natural on camera, communicating the organisation's message to students. It was a shame that much of his day-to-day activity won't have been seen by all students due to the confidential nature of many of the UHI conversations he has been included in.</p> <p>What stood out the most to Board was that WC did not lose sight of why he was doing this work.</p> <p>WC reflected that he took on the role as President because he has a passion for advocacy, student politics and students' rights to education. Education is not a privilege it's a right.</p>