Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting Date	26th June 2026
Meeting Time	10:00-13:00
Attendance	
Present	Trustees: Xander McDade (President & Chair) Neil Stewart (External Trustee & Vice Chair) Holly Pearce (Vice President Education) Oliver Sweeney (President Elect) Andi Garrity (Vice President, Education Elect) Janet Hackel (External Trustee) Victoria Hutchinson (Student Trustee) Irene Hynd (External Trustee) Oliver Sweeney (President elect) Staff: Dr Emma Miller (Director of Communications & Communities) Colin Munro (CEO) Simon Varwell (Director of Student Engagement & Representation)
Apologies	Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin (External Trustee), Dr Iain Morrison (External Trustee), Professor Keith Smyth (Observer)
Non-Attendance	

SECTION A: NORMAL BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Join	
Section	**Minutes**
1. Welcome and Meeting Management	
1.1 Apologies	Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin (External Trustee), Dr Iain Morrison (External Trustee), Professor Keith Smyth (Observer)
1.2 Declarations of Interest	None.
1.3 Minutes from 7th May 2026 Truste Board & Company Law Meeting 21st May 2026	[Papers: HTB0626-01a/b] **DECISIONS:** • The Board agreed the draft minutes of the 7th May Trustee Board and the 21st May Company Law meeting as an accurate record.

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1.4 Action Log from 7th May and 21st May	[Paper: HTB0626-02] The action log was reviewed. Various items would be covered later in the agenda. The formal letter sent to the NUS to record disaffiliation had not been acknowledged nor had the follow up email. A copy would be sent by recorded delivery to ensure safe receipt. The ratification process for confirming the appointment of the new Student Trustees would be timed to allow for them to attend in September. The Employee Handbook changes in relation to annual leave would take place this week as the new holiday year commences. New contracts were now in place for Student Officers commencing in July. The changes to the sickness absence policy would by aligned to re-appointment of the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) and associated re-fresher training. The September Board meeting would hopefully have co-pilot enabled to help assist with piloting the production of the minutes and action items. The review of the risk register format would look at risk appetite as well as the top ten risks of which those of most significance were reflected in the Annual Plan document. **DECISIONS:** • The Board noted the action log and the removal of items marked as completed.
2. President Update	
2.1 Welcome to new Student Officer Trustees	The Chair welcomed Oliver (Ollie) Sweeney, President elect and Andi Garrity, VP Education elect to the trustee board meeting and wished them every success in their year ahead.
2.2 President's Report	XM provided an update to the Board on key activities since the last meeting in May. The UHI Transformation Summit had allowed HISA to observe developments with the key areas being academic structures, shared services and income generation. Whilst HISA had been invited to sign the Partnership Accord document the focus of the agreement should be on direct UHI Partners allowing the Association to be a critical friend and voicing student concerns and priorities. The success and pace of the Summit and next steps in relation to Transformation may be gauged by the number of Academic Boards of Management approving the document this month. It was highlighted that communication of transformation progress remains focused on UHI employees and not students with reminders needing to be requested by HISA following each Summit meeting. The 2024-25 Accounts had been signed off by the auditors and submitted to OSCR and Companies House. Thanks were extended to trustees for reviewing these by email and for efforts by the staff to complete this exercise. The recent positive news in terms of confirmation of a 3.3 per cent uplift to the block grant had been welcomed. Whilst this was not at the 5 per cent level requested it was in-line with the general uplift across the Partnership. Thanks were extended to HP and CM for attending the Partnership Council in June. Training for Officers in July was organised and there had been handover meetings with the new cross campus officers during June. HP noted that the vacancies for local staffing in Shetland and Perth were now being advertised. Appreciation was extended to Trustees for their flexibility and commitment to allow for additional board meetings during this last year that involved a number of organisational challenges.

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3. CEO Update	
3.1 CEO Update	[Paper: HTB0626-03] CM introduced the CEO update that covered people, finances and partnerships. He acknowledged the recent Learning, Teaching and Student Experience conference that various colleagues had participated in and the role SV had in ensuring that student experience was added as a key theme as well as his involvement in the steering group. EM provided an update on the latest proposed guidance on single-sex spaces acknowledging that this topic remained an important topic for students. CM acknowledged the contribution of the Student Officers and the feedback received from exit interviews. Ways in which the Executive and Cross Campus Officers could be best supported was currently the focus of internal discussions and handover.
3.2 2026-27 Plan & Budget	[Paper: HTB0626-04] CM outlined the purpose of the 2026-27 Annual Plan and Budget document. This provides a greater level of detail for the various activities that team members contribute to helping deliver the three year strategy. It also acted as an important tool to highlight areas of the strategy that we were not currently funded to undertake in a meaningful way. The SVR system remained at the heart of our student experience and feedback mechanism with ambition to increase this further as well as ensuring that the modular training approach addressed student feedback and a need for UHI staff to better understand the system. HISA having a stronger campaigning voice and resourced with the communications and advocacy support to deliver that was both necessary and timely given the manifesto pledges of our new Student Officer in-take. Trustees welcomed the plan whilst expressing a degree of caution as to the level of ambition and number of activities that the available resources needs to support. Issues always arise that HISA needs to be able to respond to and the plan should allow for items to be deprioritised as necessary. A suggestion to include a link to how the plan is supporting delivery of UHI Strategic Objectives and priorities in the year ahead could be considered as a helpful preamble to the first sections of the plan. **DECISION:** • The Annual Plan 2026-27 was approved. **ACTION:** • The Annual Plan to include a reference as to how HISA's priorities support delivery of the UHI Strategic Objectives in the year ahead.
3.3 Student Engagement & Representation	[Paper: HTB0626-05a] <u>2026 Elections Report</u> SV introduced the 2026 Elections Report that was currently being shared and discussed at AP Boards of Management / UHI Court. The report highlighted the challenges associated with lower turnabout than the previous year and possible contributory factors including access to classes to promote these and capacity to support polling stations. The positive number of candidates standing for election, quality of campaigns and manifestos and the good on-line campaigning and engagement of students was acknowledged. The Boards of Management in Perth and Shetland had requested actions plans in relation to the challenges highlighted.

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	Trustees shared a wide range of perspectives and ideas acknowledging that the NUS and Articles of Association referendum had also presented Students with at times a confusing number of opportunities to be involved in election processes. Key areas for further reflection and taking a plan of action to a Student Meeting and reported back to the Trustee Board included: • Allowing campaigning ahead of the election week in order to generate interest, address the wide geography of many UHI partners and ensuring students were aware of who may be standing etc. • Explaining the role of Student Officers through the recently agreed guide as well as explanations as to what boards and committees the Officers will be members of and have influence over. This could also include support that will be provided. • Allowing Officers who are not running for re-election to promote the process and that the Executive Committee fully support and get involved. • Ensuring ahead of the election process the visibility of HISA is clear. • Requesting support from the different UHI partners to engage with students, for example campaign events with free food etc **DECISIONS:** • Enhancements to be made to the technical aspects of delivering the election process in order to help increase turnabout and engagement from students across all UHI partners. **ACTIONS:** • An action plan to be discussed at the next Board meeting and with input from a Student Meeting on steps to deliver an increased turnout for the 2027 Student Officer elections. [Paper: HTB0626-05a] <u>Board of Management Project Report</u> Apologies were received from the report author, Aimee Cuthbert who was unable to present the report findings. The project had assessed aims to ensure a strong and effective student voice at decision-making bodies in UHI – through discussions with HISA officers, HISA staff and representatives from Boards of Management across the UHI partnership. The key principles from the report were 1. Students should be supported by Boards to speak on matters affecting students and the student experience at UHI and its Academic Partners. 2. Student board members must be made to feel comfortable by Boards to participate in meetings and that their contributions matter and are valued. 3. Student board members must have adequate time to consider Board business to adequately prepare for and contribute to meetings 4. Student Board members must be supported to gather views of students so they can effectively represent their views at meetings 5. Supporting and training student board members should be shared in partnership by UHI and HISA 6. HISA commits to supporting all students involved in governance within UHI and its Academic Partners 7. HISA commits to train our elected officers with skills to attend and effectively participate in Board meetings and to support all student board members to take an active role

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	8. Action Plans for student board member support should be implemented and reviewed annually as part of effectiveness reviews Board members expressed support for these principles. Questions related to how we can assess the general impact that student board members have on influencing board decisions and what are the minimum student participation standards that should be in place across the UHI Partnership. Whilst it was acknowledged that these can be difficult to measure and can be subjective attempt to gather these should be made. Suggestions on requiring each Academic Partner to sign their commitment to the Student Partnership Agreement currently overseen by UHI Executive Office were made. **ACTIONS:** • Consideration be given to each Academic Partner demonstrating their commitment to the next Student Partnership Agreement • Ways of measuring and reporting on the meaningful student participation to Boards of Management across UHI to be discussed and reported back to the Trustee Board.
4. Governance	
4.1 Update on ratification of Articles by UHI Court and Academic Boards.	An update on the ratification progress for the new Articles of Association was provided. XM reminded Trustees that all Academic Partners had been consulted on the changes and asked for input. UHI Argyll had been unable to find time to place these on their agenda for June and had suggested their next meeting in early September. Trustees suggested alterative approval mechanism between the meetings could be utilised in order to not hold up approval. XM would chase the UHI Orkney Chair in the absence of feedback. **DECISIONS:** Trustees expressed a desire to have ratifications in place as soon as possible to ensure effective governance arrangements and for the planned deadline of July for a Company Law meeting to allow for submission to Companies House not to slip. **ACTIONS:** • XM/SV to draft a response to UHI Argyll and XM to chase UHI Orkney Chair.
4.2 Future Chairing of Trustee Board	[Paper: HTB0526-04a] The updated Terms of Reference for the Chair of Trustees was discussed. This reflected feedback from the last meeting. IM had shared a suggestion as to the election process. Trustees welcomed the approach noting that every election for a Chair should involve a ballot, even where only one candidate stands. The terms of reference to be updated to reflect the election process. **DECISIONS:** • Election process for the Chair: (i) Call for expressions of interest to externals and short submission e.g. 300 words to be sent to Company Secretary (ii) Eligibility check i.e. external, length of remaining tenure (iii) Statements shared with Board

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	(iv) Preference vote (each trustee votes in order of preference, one for favoured candidate, two for second favoured candidate etc). A vote will take place for every election including where only one candidate is proposed for election. A vote is not invalid if fewer than the maximum number of preferences is used. Trustees standing for election will also vote. Votes are sent to Company Secretary who will collate and present the results for each candidate. The Company Secretary will not disclose the voting preferences of any Trustee either during the vote or after. (v) If a tie, the Student President has casting vote and this will be exercised after the voting results have been shared. • The Trustees agreed that whilst the Articles of Association await full ratification, the President Elect and the Vice-President would act as the focal point for any issues or decisions that the CEO requires. **ACTIONS:** • The Terms of Reference for the Chair to be updated to include the election process. • CM as Company Secretary to commence the Chair Election process as soon as possible.
SECTION B: RESERVED BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Do Not Attend	
5. Reserved Business	
5.1 FCDC 17th June 2026 report	[Paper: HTB0626-06] These ere confidential items and were not minuted.
6. Any Other Competent Business	
6.1 2026/27 Schedule of Proposed Board and Committee meetings	[Paper: HTB0626-07] The proposed dates for the 2026-27 academic year were approved. **ACTION:** • Calendar invites to be circulated for Trustee Board and Committee dates for 2026-27.
6.2 Acknowledgements	NS expressed sincere thanks to both Xander and Holly for their contributions to the Trustee Board over the last demanding year. He expressed thanks for the appointment of the new CEO and for all the ways in which various changes to the Association had been navigated. CM expressed thanks on behalf of HISA staff and Student Officers. He acknowledged that they had found ways in which through all the demands they had kept their role and purpose and the forefront of decision making. XM and HP thanked the Board for their warm appreciation and wished the organization all the very best for the future.

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