

Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting Date	26 th March 2026
Meeting Time	10:00-12:30
Attendance	
Present	Xander McDade (President & Chair) Neil Stewart (External Trustee & Vice Chair) Holly Pearce (Vice President Education) Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin (External Trustee) Janet Hackel (External Trustee) Irene Hynd (External Trustee) Colin Munro (CEO) Dr Emma Miller (Community Engagement Manager) Simon Varwell (Director of Student Engagement & Representation) Keith Smyth (Dean of Learning, Teaching & Students, Observer)
Apologies	Victoria Hutchinson, Dr Iain Morrison & Hannah Laycock (Operations and Governance Coordinator)
Non-Attendance	

SECTION A: NORMAL BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Join	
Section	Minutes
1. Welcome and Meeting Management	
1.1 Apologies	Victoria Hutchinson, Dr Iain Morrison & Hannah Laycock (Operations and Governance Coordinator)
1.2 Declarations of Interest	None.
1.3 Minutes from 20 th February 2026	[Paper: HTB0326-01] DECISIONS: The Board agreed the draft minutes of the 20th February 2026 as an accurate record. Apologies from Keith Smyth had been received and would be recorded.

1.4 Action Log from 20 th February 2026	[Paper: HTB0326-02] DECISIONS: The Board noted the action log.
2. Directorate Updates	
2.1 Community & Communications	[Paper: HTB0326-06] EM presented the update-on community and communications that had been postponed from the February meeting. She highlighted that levels of participation in clubs and societies was now beyond pre-covid levels. Engagement in the election process had seen higher numbers of students voting via the website and QR codes on posters etc. The email communications through election week had also been seen to be positive. The Student Awards will be published in May and with HISA now undertaking the administration in full may provide opportunities for future improvements to the process. The success of the Shinty Teams in recent matches was highlighted together with positive media engagement for the Supper Dupers (Oban) and the Islamic Society (UHI House). Trustees were concerned that the UHI EDI Committee had not met since October but hoped the appointment of the new co-ordinator would ensure the necessary support for this committee is in place. The work of this committee is not only related to HR focused topics and needs to include monitoring of organisational support and commitment. KS would ensure this was discussed with colleagues. (IH temporarily left the meeting)
2.2 Student Engagement & Representation	[Paper: HTB0326-07a] SV presented the update on student engagement and representation highlighting two areas from the report. The first being the availability of HISA spaces at UHI House, UHI Inverness and UHI Perth. Positive discussions had been taking place regarding the visibility of the Association and access to key services to students. Secondly, Student Voice Rep numbers have further increased, with the meaningful conversations being captured through reports published on the webpage. Training and support is being focused on ensuring that officers can then consistently work with local management to deliver on areas of improvement or concern. As many of these issues impact retention and satisfaction this topic will now be a standing item on the liaison meetings between HISA and the Learning, Teaching and Student Directorate. External Trustees highlighted the inconsistent PAT system across UHI partners, within academic areas and between courses. HISA has been highlighting the system as part of new joiner activities and through the Advice Service. KS highlighted that the system had been reviewed last year and an action plan identified of key areas for improvement. The Chair provided Trustees with an update on the Transformation Project and the outcomes of the meeting between partners that he and HP had attended in March. The decision to adopt option three would require HISA to

	continue to work with the local board and committee structures of individual institutions. The next meeting would occur in May and CM had been invited to attend where the discussions on corporate service provision could provide opportunities for HISA to consider. Trustees welcomed the exploration of these areas including for HR.
2.3 Articles and Schedules Referendum	[Paper: HTB0326-07b] The Board noted the results from the Articles and Schedules referendum held concurrently with voting for the Student Elections. The results were 200 For, 1 Against and 19 Abstentions. Whilst a clear indication of preference it did not achieve the quorum for a referendum of 400 voters. In line with the Articles an all-student meeting will be called for the purpose of ratifying the proposed Articles and Schedules. ACTION: The Board approved for an all-student meeting to be called to ratify the revised Articles and Schedules. The quorum for referendum results criteria to be explored to identify whether a lower level of quorate could be considered where a majority vote reaches a significant level, for example 75 per cent.
3. CEO Update	
3.1 CEO Update	The Chair welcomed CM to their first board meeting and noted that impressions on first days with the HISA would be covered later in the agenda.
4. Governance	
4.1 Future Chairing of the Trustee Board	(IH rejoined the meeting) The Chair outlined a proposal to further improve governance arrangements by separating the role of the President from that of the Chair of the Trustees. Given the size of HISA, the reduction in number of cross campus officers and the range of priorities faced by the President and Vice President Education the board were asked to reflect on the merits of having one of the external trustees undertake the Chair function with the President serving as the vice-chair. The trustees welcomed this development whilst highlighting that this would be a permanent change to arrangements and not revisited after each election outcome. As such further discussions would be helpful with the incoming President including the arrangements to ensure that the CEO was available to brief the Chair and Vice Chair on key organisational developments. This would also assist the board to remain focused on strategic issues and avoid operational matters that the CEO can provide assurance on via their update reports.

	DECISION: The Board to explore further the appointment of a Chair from the External Trustees and the Vice Chair being the President with the aim of reflecting this permanently within the governing documents. ACTION: The Chair and the CEO to draft an outline of the next steps in relation to changes to the Chairing of the Trustee Board and to bring these for a final decision by the June board meeting latest.
5.1 Acknowledgement of Ahren Armstrong's Board Departure	The Board noted that Ahren Armstrong was stepping down as a trustee and expressed their thanks and appreciation for his contribution to meetings and the wider work of HISA.
5.2 Appointment of Company Secretary	Following the resignation of Rachel Burns as Company Secretary, CM in his role of CEO was appointed as the new Company Secretary. ACTION: CM to be appointed to Companies House as HISA Company Secretary.
5.3 Schedule of Meetings	It was confirmed that the schedule of committee meetings included CGRC in April, July and October.
SECTION B: RESERVED BUSINESS – Attendees and Observers Do Not Attend	
6. Financial Update	
6.1 CEO Reflections	These were confidential items and were not minuted.
6.2 Financial Update	[Paper: HTB0326-08] CM provided an update on progress with the Financial Audit for year ended 31 July 2025, an update on the 2025/26 financial position and the outline budget for 2026/27-and-three-year projections. The financial projections reflected discussions at the February Board meeting. The statutory deadline to submit audited financial statements to both OSCR and Companies House was 30th April 2025. DECISIONS: The Board noted the current status of the financial audit for year ended 31 July 2025 to allow for submission of the audited Financial Statements to OSCR and Companies House by the statutory deadline of 30th April.

	• The Board noted the current financial status at March 2026 and that the year-end reforecast will be considered at the April FCDC (revised from 7th to 17th April). • The Board noted the financial projections for 2026/27 and to 2028/29, and approved the changes to the Student Officer pay from 1 July 2026, together with the underlying inflation increases for professional staff including maintaining real wage increases for local officer roles. ACTION: • The April FCDC to be updated on the completion of the 2024/25 audit together with forecast projections for 2025/26. • HR to update pay awards based on the assumptions included in the 2026/27 projections.
7. Any Other Competent Business	
7.1	The Chair highlighted the launch of the Language Accessibility Promise at Forth Valley College earlier in the week and acknowledged the lead role HISA had played in this initiative. Advertising for the Student Vacancies to the board to be undertaken with a view to appointing successful candidates before the summer holiday period commences. ACTION: • CM/SV to discuss with IH the timing and support to the ARC.