Highlands & Islands Students' Association

A GUIDE FOR STUDENT OFFICER ROLES

May 2026

Being a HISA Student Officer

The Student Officer Team (Cross Campus and Local Officers) are the elected leaders of the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA). They serve as the lead student representatives, championing the voices of UHI students within the University, as well as at local and national levels. Student officers carry out the duties and responsibilities set out in the Associations' Articles and Schedules.

At HISA there are twelve roles which is significantly more than other student associations highlighting the geographically wide area and number of UHI Partners that the University presence operates across:

- Student President (the President)
- Vice President Education
- Argyll Depute President
- Inverness Depute President
- Moray Depute President
- Orkney Depute President
- Perth Depute President
- North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (North)
- North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (West)
- North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (Hebrides)
- Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), Depute President
- Shetland Depute President

Academic partners have a single local Depute President except for UHI North, West & Hebrides which will have three local officers reflecting their significantly dispersed geography. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig doesn't have local HISA representation, but is represented at the UHI Partnership level by cross-campus officers. There is currently no local officer role for the Highland Theological College.

All Student Officer positions represent perspectives that are equally legitimate. Cross-Campus Officers are expected to listen to and respect these differing viewpoints while responsibly exercising the broader authority their roles entail.

The **Student Officer role** brings together three closely linked responsibilities:

1. **Serving as an elected Student Officer**
2. **Acting as a Student Trustee of the Association (for cross-campus officers)**
3. **Working as a paid representative of the Association**

Student Officers balance the different components throughout their term. The purpose of this role description is to outline each responsibility and provide clarity on how you are expected to fulfil your duties.

Alongside these responsibilities, Student Officers will require a range of skills to carry out their duties including:

- Regularly Go Out And Talk (GOAT) to the students that they represent
- Attend and take an active part in meetings associated with the role
- Respect confidentiality
- Build constructive relationships and work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders, both internal and external
- Act as a champion for UHI students
- Speaking up for UHI students on key issues

- Share their first-hand knowledge UHI student experience, demonstrated through their work
- Signpost students to appropriate support services when they are experiencing difficulties
- Feature in our digital and print media, including photos and videos
- Respond to queries in a timely manner.

The examples above are indicative and not comprehensive; Student Officers may be required to demonstrate further skills and qualities in fulfilling their wider responsibilities.

A structured programme of training, development opportunities, and staff and local support is provided to enable their success in the role.

Elected Student Officer Roles

Each Student Officer is responsible for a distinct portfolio of responsibilities that reflects the diversity of the student experience, the wide variety of UHI Local Partners and the distinct aspects of student life across the varied geographical and cultural aspects of the Highlands and Islands. While they work collectively as a team, each Student Officer leads on a specific area of representation and engagement, ensuring that the diverse needs of students are championed effectively across the University, HISA and the wider local communities. The following outlines the core purpose and focus of each role.

Cross-Campus Officer Roles

President

The President provides **leadership for HISA** in its campaign to improve the student experience across the UHI partnership. They act as the main ambassador and external spokesperson for HISA and works with senior staff members within UHI and each of the academic Partners as well as with local councils, local MPs, local MSPs and other external stakeholders across the Highlands & Islands.

The President **supports and empowers HISA's team of Student Officers** and works closely with the **senior management team** to make sure the organisation is working towards its vision and values.

The President is a **member of both Court and Partnership Council**, two of the highest governance bodies within UHI.

The President is also the **Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees** and along with the Chair of the Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the performance management of HISA's Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The President **represents HISA at significant events** including at a number of graduation ceremonies each year.

Vice-President, Education

The Vice President, Education is HISA's **lead cross campus officer for academic representation and cross campus education campaigns**. They work in partnership with UHI's Deputy Principal Academic and Research, UHI's Deans of Faculty and Associate Deans, and UHI's Department of Learning, Teaching & Students, as well as with CDN (College Development Network), QAA Scotland (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education), sparqs (Student Partnership in Quality Scotland) and other external agencies to enhance learning and teaching across the UHI partnership.

The Vice President Education **supports and empowers HISA's Local Officers** and network of over 500 **Student Voice Reps (SVRs)** to improve the learning experience within their academic partner. The Vice President Education **sits on UHI's key learning and teaching committees**, including Academic Council and Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC), to ensure that students interests are represented and defended when decisions about learning and teaching are being made.

The Vice President Education also **sits on UHI's court**.

The Vice President Education may be required to **represent HISA at significant events** including at a number of graduation ceremonies each year.

Local Officers

Local Officers are responsible for **taking the lead in campaigning** to improve the learning experience and the wider student experience at their academic partner(s). They are a **member of their academic partner's Board of Management** (BoM), the body legally responsible for the running of their academic partner.

Local Officers **work in partnership with HISA's Cross-Campus Officers and senior UHI staff members as well as senior staff members and Student Voice Reps (SVRs)** at their academic partner to ensure that the interests of students studying at their academic partner are represented and defended when decisions regarding learning, teaching and student support are being made. They will undertake the class visits during student induction period. In their role they are the student quality lead for their academic partner including taking part in Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP), helping to write the college Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) and leading student engagement in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER).

Local Officers support the development, delivery and promotion of both **local and cross-campus activities, campaigns, and events for students at their academic partner**. Local Officers also support the promotion of extra-curricular/co-curricular opportunities available to students studying at their academic partner, including HISA's Sports Clubs, Societies, and Student Networks.

Local Officers are **supported by a local campus committee of volunteer students** to maximise student participation in college activities and committees. The local officers provide opportunities, training and support for local campus committees members as part of helping ensure that a succession of future candidates are engaged in the work of HISA and well equipped to stand for elections.

Local Officers **represent HISA at significant local events** such as graduation ceremonies.

Diversity of the UHI Partnership

Students experience UHI learning across a diverse range of opportunities including higher national, vocational, professional, degree, postgraduate or through apprenticeships (foundation, modern or graduate). They may be studying full-time, part-time, evenings, or on-line. Partners may be located in urban settings or more rural local community settings. HISA seeks to recognise this diversity in responding to student views and presenting research and insights to help improve the student experience. All officers are encouraged to promote these aspects of UHI diversity.

Elected Officer Responsibilities

Student Officers are elected student leaders who shape the student experience and influence the direction of HISA. Their responsibilities include:

• Representing student views to the University of the Highlands and Islands'/ academic partners, local partners and national organisations;

• Leading and supporting campaigns, working with students and external partners;

• Chairing and contributing to committees, meetings and forums, and ensuring actions are completed;

• Using research and insight to understand and improve the student experience;

• Promoting ethical, fair and inclusive practice across all HISA activity;

• Encouraging student engagement in services, recreational and social activities and democratic processes;

• Staying informed about sector and national developments affecting students;

• Supporting local voluntary student leaders and representatives including Student Voice Representatives;

• Participating in UHI/ Local Academic Partner governing body / board of management and committees decision-making structures;

• Working collaboratively as part of the Student Officer Team.

Key Working Relationships

To deliver their responsibilities effectively, Officers build strong working relationships with:

• Students;

• Fellow Officers;

• Chief Executive Officer and Student Association employees;

• HISA Trustees (including Student representatives and External Trustees);

• UHI Principal & Vice Chancellor, Principals and Vice Principals of Local Academic Partners;

• Academic representatives and senior employees;

• UHI Court / Local Academic Partner Boards;

• External partners including transport companies, local councillors/ local Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament.

Accountability to Students

As elected representatives, Officers are accountable to the student body. They are expected to:

• Act on student feedback and uphold democratic mandates;

• Report regularly through HISA's democratic structures, including Student Meetings;

• Demonstrate transparency in decision-making and ensure students remain central to their work.

Decision-Making and Delegated Authority

Officers are expected to:

• Exercise sound judgement within the scope of their role;

• Consult with students, colleagues and stakeholders where appropriate;

• Escalate matters requiring senior oversight to HISA's Senior Management Team, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Trustee Board;

• Make decisions responsibly, collaboratively and in line with HISA policy.

Digital Conduct and Public Representation

As public representatives of HISA, Officers must:

• Use social media responsibly and uphold organisational reputation;

• Engage professionally in online spaces, including when responding to concerns or criticism;

• Avoid sharing confidential information or posting content that could undermine trust.

Portfolio Flexibility

While each Student Officer has a defined portfolio, they are expected to:

• Work flexibly across portfolios where needed;

• Adapt to emerging student issues and organisational priorities;

• Support crosscutting projects and collective Student Officer Team priorities.

Student Trustee of HISA Board

The President and Vice President, Education serve as Student Trustees of HISA for the duration of their elected term. The President has the position of Vice-Chair of Trustees. Local Officers can apply and be appointed as Student Trustees board members. The board also has External Trustees and all board members as charity trustees share collective responsibility.

Board Trustee duties are normally undertaken on a voluntary basis and fall outside the normal working week. This recognises that a charity trustee cannot be paid whilst undertaking their role. Student Officer Trustees can use working hours to prepare for and attend trustee meetings.

<u>Core Expectations</u>

- Attend and contribute to approximately four Board meetings and four committee meetings per year.
- Read papers in advance and complete any agreed actions arising from meetings.
- Ensure HISA is well governed, financially sustainable, and delivering its charitable objectives and strategic priorities.

<u>Legal Duties of Trustees</u>

- Follow the law applicable to Scottish charities and the governing document (the Articles of Association and Schedules).
- Act responsibly and always in the best interests of the charity.
- Use reasonable care and skill in decision-making.
- Make well-informed decisions, seeking advice where appropriate.
- Be open and transparent about actual or potential conflicts of interest.

<u>Key Responsibilities</u>

- Act as an ambassador for HISA, safeguarding its reputation and values.
- Contribute to the development and delivery of the strategic plan, policies, and

- procedures.
- Ensure HISA's resources are used appropriately and only in pursuit of its charitable aims.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements, including charity law, as well as policies and procedures.
- Ensure HISA operates in line with its governing documents.
- Oversee the maintenance of proper accounts and records.
- Monitor organisational performance and progress against strategic objectives.
- Protect HISA's assets, ensuring their appropriate use and security.
- Work collaboratively with fellow Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to support the effective management of the organisation.

Paid Representative of HISA

Officers are both elected representatives and represent HISA in a similar way to employees of HISA. As such they hold a fixed term contract and are expected to meet the same professional standards, behaviours and obligations as all other employees. They must act in a way that reflects the values of HISA and support a positive, inclusive working culture.

Expectations

• Work the hours assigned to your role and report absence in a timely and effective manner.

• Be flexible regarding evening and occasional weekend commitments during peak periods (e.g., Welcome Week, elections, major events).

• Receive time off in lieu for additional hours worked.

• Engaged at Grade 1, scale point 2.

• Entitled to annual leave in line with the leave policy.

• Work closely with HISA colleagues as part of the employee team.

• Participate in regular one to one meetings, performance reviews and development discussions.

• Access internal and external training to support success in the role.

Policy and Compliance

• Follow all HISA policies and procedures, including those relating to conduct, equality, safeguarding, health and safety, data protection and appropriate use of resources.

• Demonstrate professionalism, reliability and respect in all interactions with students, colleagues and external partners.

• Contribute to a positive, inclusive and supportive working environment.

Professional Boundaries and Conduct

• Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, recognising the peer-to-peer nature of the role.

• Avoid conflicts of interest and act impartially when representing students or contributing to decisions.

• Model respectful, inclusive and ethical behaviour at all times.

• Confidentiality and Data Handling.

• Comply with GDPR and use secure communication channels when handling sensitive information.

• Store and share confidential information appropriately, following HISA procedures.

• Understand that breaches of confidentiality may result in formal action.

Wellbeing and Support

• Engage with wellbeing support and maintain healthy boundaries to manage the emotional demands of the role.

• Seek guidance or supervision when dealing with challenging or distressing situations.

Additional Information

Any member of HISA can nominate themselves to run for a Cross-Campus Officer role. It doesn't matter if you are on a college course or a university course, whether you are a Home Student or an International Student, or what year of your studies you are in, you can nominate yourself for a Cross-Campus Officer role. If you are not in your final year of your course, you will be able to take a year out from your course (a 'sabbatical') to undertake the role and then be able to continue with your studies once your time in the role ends.

Any member of HISA can nominate themselves for any Local Officer role where they meet the following criteria:

Argyll Depute President	Registered at UHI Argyll or one of UHI Argyll's campuses or learning centres.
Inverness Depute President	Registered at UHI Inverness or one of UHI Inverness's campuses or learning centres.
Moray Depute President	Registered at UHI Moray or one of UHI Moray's campuses.
Orkney Depute President	Registered at UHI Orkney or one of UHI Orkney's campuses.
Perth Depute President	Registered at UHI Perth.
North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (North)	Registered at UHI North, West & Hebrides and based at Alness Campus, the Dornoch Campus, the Rural Studies Centre (Halkirk) or the Thurso campuses. You must also be continuing your studies throughout the academic year.
North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (West)	Registered at UHI North, West & Hebrides and based at Auchtertyre Learning Centre, the Fort William Campus, the Gairloch Centre, the Kilchoan Centre, the Kinlochleven College Centre, the Mallaig College Centre, the Strontian College Centre, or the Ullapool Centre.
North, West & Hebrides, Depute President (Hebrides)	Registered at UHI North, West & Hebrides and based at the Barra Centre, the Benbecula Centre, the Broadford Centre, Cnoc Soilleir, the North Uist Campus, the Portree Centre, or the Stornoway campus.
Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), Depute President	Registered at the Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS).
Shetland Depute President	Registered at UHI Shetland or one of UHI Shetland's campuses.

Note: Registered at means at the time of election to the role.

Student Officers may be asked to support disciplinary processes, including cases relating to misconduct, academic appeals and other formal matters. As panel members, they work alongside University of the Highlands & Islands and Students' Union staff to review evidence and reach fair outcomes. These environments can be high-pressure, and can involve dealing with staff and/or students who are distressed.

Full training, guidance and wrap-around support will be provided to ensure Student Officers feel confident and well-prepared for this aspect of the role.

HR/ Line Manager Responsibilities: Cross Campus Officers: Chief Executive Officer, Local Officers: Engagement Coordinator

Contract type: Fixed term contract commencing on 1st July annually for a period of 12 months.