



Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting Date	19 th January 2026
Meeting Time	12.30-13.00
Attendance	
Present	Xander McDade, Students' Association President (Chair) Holly Pearce, Vice President Education Craig Ward, Argyll Depute President Charlotte Usher, Moray President Abigail Teague, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (West) Andi Garrity, Perth President Harley Green, Shetland Depute President
Apologies	Chloe Young, Inverness President Oliver Sweeney, Inverness Depute President Millie Foster, Perth Depute President
Absent	Susan Loughlin, Highland Theological College (HTC) Depute President Emmaleigh Hay, Moray Depute President Alasdair Macleod, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (Islands) Cole Garscadden, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (North) Mila Tabone, Orkney Depute President Hannah Lehmann, Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) Depute President
Attended	Simon Varwell, Director of Student Engagement & Representation Paul Stalker, Insight & Democracy Coordinator (Clerk)

Section	Minutes
1	Meeting Management
1.1 Apologies	The Students' Association President noted that the Inverness President, the Inverness Depute President, and the Perth Depute President had sent their apologies in advance.
1.2 Draft November Executive Committee Meeting Minutes	The Chair made reference to the draft minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on Wednesday 24 th November 2025 and asked for all those who attended that meeting to approve whether this was an accurate reflection or not. The minutes were approved.

1.3 Executive Committee Action Log Update	The Students' Association President noted that the one uncompleted action around future Executive Committee meeting dates & deadlines would be visited later in the meeting during item 3.3.
2	Representation & Student Engagement
2.1 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement Priority Areas	<p>The Students' Association President highlighted that the Executive Committee needed to identify and feedback to UHI two or three potential priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the Chief Executive had developed a list of potential priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement based on an analysis of the student feedback captured in recent student engagement activities and surveys.</p> <p>The Students' Association President asked members if they had any feedback about the potential priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement that the Chief Executive had identified. The Students' Association President also asked members if they had a preference towards any of the potential priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement that the Chief Executive had identified.</p> <p>The Shetland Depute President noted that they felt that physical spaces should be a priority area for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement given the amount of complaints HISA had received from students about poor or broken campus facilities. The Shetland Depute President also noted that they felt that virtual spaces should be a priority area for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement given the amount of complaints HISA had received from UHI students about the quality of their online learning experience at UHI.</p> <p>The Shetland Depute President highlighted that both of UHI Shetland's campuses had suffered a number of equipment failures over recent years, including the failure of the C/D block lift on the Lerwick campus. The Shetland Depute President also highlighted that they had received feedback from UHI Shetland students that they struggled to access UHI's online services due to a lack of support.</p> <p>The Students' Association President and the Perth President noted that there had been a lot of estate based issues at UHI Perth over recent years, including the failure of the main lift in the Brahan Building.</p> <p>The Students' Association President highlighted that during their time as Perth President around 75% of the feedback they received from UHI Perth students was estates based. The Students' Association President also highlighted that they were aware that UHI's poor campus facilities had led to some Higher Education (HE) students to decide to continue their studies at a neighbouring provider.</p> <p>The Moray President noted that more than 75% of the feedback they received from UHI Moray students was estates based. The Moray President also noted that the estates based issues raised by UHI Moray students ranged from overflowing bins to the set-up of classrooms.</p> <p>The Vice President Education noted that they felt that online spaces should be a priority area for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement given the student feedback about the online learning experience at UHI. The Vice President Education also noted that they felt that physical spaces should be a priority area for the 2026-29 Student Partnership Agreement given that the majority of issues raised by Student Voice Reps (SVRs) were about campus facilities.</p>

	<p>The Students' Association President asked if other members agreed with the Shetland Depute President and Vice President Education that physical and online spaces should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Argyll Depute President, Moray President, the North, West & Hebrides Depute President (West), and the Perth President indicated that they felt that physical and online spaces should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Students' Association President asked if any other member had a preference towards any of the potential priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement that the Chief Executive had identified.</p> <p>The Students' Association President noted that they felt that contact time should be a priority area for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement. The Students' Association President also noted that they felt peer-to-peer support should be a priority area for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Students' Association President explained that UHI students had consistently indicated in student surveys that they had concerns around the amount and/ or quality of contact time. The Students' Association President also explained that UHI students had indicated in the recent Transformation Survey that contact time was one of the top priorities for them.</p> <p>The Students' Association President highlighted that budgetary constraints within the UHI Partnership had resulted in a reduction in the amount of contact time students had. The Students' Association President also highlighted that they were concerned that further budgetary constraints within the UHI Partnership could result in further reductions in the amount of contact time students had.</p> <p>The Vice President Education noted that they supported the Students' Association Presidents' suggestion that contact time and peer-to-peer support should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement. The Vice President Education also noted that a lack of contact time was one of the issues UHI students had frequently raised with them during their time as a Student Officer.</p> <p>The Students' Association President asked if other members agreed that contact time and peer-to-peer support should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Argyll Depute President, the Moray President, the North, West & Hebrides Depute President (West), and the Perth President indicated that they agreed that contact time and peer-to-peer support should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Students' Association President highlighted that they would feedback to UHI that the Executive Committee felt that physical and online spaces should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement. The Students' Association President also highlighted that they would feedback to UHI that the Executive Committee felt that contact time and peer-to-peer support should be priority areas for the 2026-2029 Student Partnership Agreement.</p>
2.2 Transport Issues Across The Region	<p>The Moray President highlighted that difficulties around commuting to and from campus by public transport was one the most frequently raised issues by UHI Moray students. The Moray President also highlighted that they were</p>

aware that difficulties around commuting to and from campus by public transport had also been an issue for UHI Inverness students.

The Moray President explained that due to bus and rail timetables many UHI Moray students with 9am classes faced either the choice of arriving in Elgin over an hour before their campus opened or arriving late for their class. The Moray President also explained that due to bus and rail timetables many UHI Moray students in the winter faced having to either leave their classes early or endure waiting outside in the cold and dark for the next bus because their campus had closed before 5pm.

The Moray President noted that previous efforts to address these difficulties around commuting to and from campus by public transport had focused on trying to get public transport operators to change and improve their services and timetables. The Moray President also noted that they felt that trying to get public transport operators like Stagecoach North Scotland to improve their services and timetables would be fruitless, especially over the short-time.

The Moray President highlighted that HISA had previously written to Stagecoach North Scotland to complain that students were regularly arriving late for their classes or missing them completely due to service cancellations and timetabling issues.

The Moray President noted that they felt that it would be more productive to campaign and/ or lobby Academic Partners to move the start time of the academic day to 10am than to campaign and/ or lobby public transport operators to improve their services and timetables. The Moray President also noted that they felt that it would be more productive to campaign and/ or lobby Academic Partners to change their campus opening and closing times to fit with their students commute to and from campus than to campaign and/ or lobby public transport operators to improve their services and timetables.

The Moray President highlighted that they wanted to know from members whether difficulties around commuting to campus by public transport was an issue at their Academic Partner. The Moray President also highlighted that they wanted to know if members supported campaigning and/ or lobbying Academic Partners to change the start time of the academic day to 10am and or change their campus opening and closing times.

The Moray President asked members whether difficulties around commuting to campus by public transport was an issue at their Academic Partner. The Moray President asked members whether they supported campaigning and/ or lobbying Academic Partners to change the start time of the academic day to 10am and or change their campus opening and closing times.

The Shetland Depute President highlighted that in Shetland the bus timetables didn't align with when students need to travel to and from UHI Shetland's campuses. The Shetland Depute President also highlighted that UHI Shetland students were missing classes due to late running buses.

The Shetland Depute President noted that they felt that the Academic Partners were in a far better position than the Students' Association to place pressure on bus companies to change their timetables. The Shetland Depute President also noted that they felt that it might be easier to get Academic Partners to change their campus opening times than getting bus companies to change their timetables.

The Shetland Depute President highlighted that they didn't feel that there would be much value in campaigning or lobbying to change the start time of the academic day as the Academic Partners would be highly hesitant to make

any changes to contracts or working practices that would require trade union consultation. The Shetland Depute President also highlighted that they supported campaigning and lobbying Academic Partners to change their campus opening times to ensure that students were not left outside

The Perth President noted that the majority of transport related complaints from UHI Perth students were about the poor state of UHI Perth's access roads and car parking facilities. The Perth President also noted that a number of mature students at UHI Perth had raised concerns around the costs of commuting to campus.

The Moray President highlighted that the costs of commuting to campus by bus and train was a real issue for many mature students given the fare increases over recent years.

The Moray President noted that unlike students aged under 22, mature students did not receive free bus travel. The Moray President also noted that the Young Persons Railcard was now only available to full-time mature students.

The Moray President asked members whether they supported campaigning to extend free bus travel to all students. The Moray President also asked members whether they supported campaigning to extend the eligibility of the Young Persons Railcard to part-time students aged over 25.

The Shetland Depute President noted that they felt that there might be value in campaigning to extend the eligibility of the Young Persons Railcard to part-time students aged over 25. The Shetland Depute President also noted that they felt that there might be value in campaigning to extend the eligibility of the Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) to all students aged over 21.

The Perth President highlighted that mature students under 31 were now eligible for the 26-30 Railcard.

The Students' Association President noted that the Young Persons Railcard and the 26-30 Railcard were really only useful to those traveling long distances due to the £12 minimum fare rule for travel before 10am. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the Scottish Government was about to start the rollout of a £2 bus fare cap pilot within the Highlands & Islands.

The Perth President noted that the transport section in NUS Scotland's 2026 Student Manifesto included a call for all political parties and candidates to pledge to introduce a student discount for all rail tickets in Scotland that would be available to all students. The Perth President also noted that the transport section in NUS Scotland's 2026 Student Manifesto included a call for all political parties and candidates to pledge to expand free bus travel eligibility to all students regardless of age.

The Moray President asked members if they had any suggestions about how HISA could campaign and/ or lobby the Academic Partners to change their campus opening and closing times to accommodate the commuting patterns of their students.

The Students' Association President suggested sending an open letter to the principals across the UHI Partnership calling on them to be mindful of their students commuting patterns when setting timetables and when deciding the opening and closing times of their campus for the 2026-27 academic year.

	<p>The Students' Association President asked the Moray President if they would be willing to draft an open letter that could be sent to the principals across the UHI Partnership calling on them to be mindful of their student's commuting patterns when setting timetables and when deciding the opening and closing times of their campus for the 2026-27 academic year.</p> <p>The Moray President confirmed that they would be happy to draft an open letter that could be sent to the principals across the UHI Partnership containing a call for them to be mindful of their student's commuting patterns when setting timetables and when deciding the opening and closing times of their campus for the 2026-27 academic year.</p> <p>The Students' Association President suggested that the Moray President work with Insight & Democracy Coordinator and HISA's Communications Team to develop the draft open letter to the principals across the UHI Partnership. The Students' Association President also suggested that Moray President bring the draft letter to the principals across the UHI Partnership to a future Executive Committee Meeting for further discussion and approval.</p> <p>ACTION: Moray President to develop a draft open letter that could be sent to the principals across the UHI Partnership calling on them to be mindful of their students commuting patterns when setting timetables and when deciding the opening and closing times of their campus for the 2026-27 academic year.</p>
2.3 Local Protests	<p>The Students' Association President highlighted that over recent months there had been a number of local protests across Scotland, including in Inverness and Perth, against the housing of asylum seekers in local hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the protests against the housing of asylum seekers in local hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites had resulted a number of counter-protests.</p> <p>The Students' Association President noted that they and the Vice President Education wanted to know if members felt that the Students' Association should take a cross-campus position on the protests around the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites in the Highlands & Islands.</p> <p>The Students' Association President and Vice President Education explained that the Students' Association had so far approached the local protests around the housing of asylum seekers as a local level issue, with local teams determining if and how to respond to them.</p> <p>The Vice President Education explained that the recent proposal to house asylum seekers at the Cameron Barracks in Inverness had resulted in a number of UHI students contacting the HISA Inverness Team to express their support and solidarity towards asylum seekers as well as concerns about those protesting against the proposal. The Vice President Education also explained that the recent proposal to house asylum seekers at the Cameron Barracks in Inverness had resulted in a number of UHI students contacting the HISA Inverness Team to express their opposition to the proposal.</p> <p>The Vice President Education highlighted that the HISA Inverness Team had sent out an email statement to UHI Inverness students in response to the protests around the proposal to house asylum seekers at the Cameron Barracks in Inverness. The Vice President Education also highlighted that the HISA Inverness Team had run a number of open meetings/ drop-in sessions for students in response to the protests around the proposal to house asylum seekers at the Cameron Barracks in Inverness.</p>

	<p>The Students' Association President asked members whether they felt that it was important for the Students' Association to take a cross-campus position to protests around the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites.</p> <p>The Students' Association President noted that they that felt there would be risks to both taking and not taking public position given the level of controversy around the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites. The Students' Association President also noted that responses to any Students' Association statement would need to careful managed given the level of controversy around the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites.</p> <p>The Students' Association President highlighted that a number of charities and local authorities had encountered significant backlashes for their statements on the protests around the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites.</p> <p>The Students' Association President asked members whether they felt that protests around the housing of asylum seekers should continue to be delt as a local level issue, with local teams determining if and how to respond to them.</p> <p>The Moray President noted that they felt that it would be useful if there was a template statement that local teams could use to respond to local protests around the housing of asylum seekers.</p> <p>The Students' Association President asked members if they supported the development of a template statement that could be used by local teams to respond to local protests around the housing of asylum seekers.</p> <p>The North, West & Hebrides Depute President (West), Perth President, and the Shetland Depute President indicated that they supported the development of template statement that could be used by local teams to respond to local protests around the housing of asylum seekers.</p> <p>The Students' Association President noted that they would work with the Vice President Education and HISA's Communications Team to develop a template statement that could be used by local teams to respond to local protests around the housing of asylum seekers.</p> <p>ACTION: Students' Association President to develop a template statement that can be used by local teams to respond to local protests around the housing of asylum seekers.</p>
3	AOCB
3.1 2026 Student Elections	<p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator noted that nominations for the 2026 Student Elections had opened at noon (12:00).</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator highlighted that all HISA employees, including Student Officers, shared a joint responsibility to ensure that the Students' Association's Student Elections are free and fair. The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also highlighted that all HISA employees, including Student Officers, shared a joint responsibility to ensure that the Students' Association was not seen to prefer or support one candidate over another.</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator explained that although there was no requirement for Student Officers to remain impartial and neutral during the Student Elections, Student Officers were required to take either annual leave or special leave in order to campaign for themselves or another candidate</p>

	<p>during the voting period in order to help ensure that HISA was not seen to be endorsing or supporting any individual candidate(s). The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also explained that Student Officers were prohibited from using any resources that they have access to because of their role, including HISA staff branded items, in order to help ensure that HISA was not seen to be endorsing or supporting any individual candidate(s).</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator highlighted that Career Staff members needed to remain impartial and neutral throughout the elections process in order to help ensure that HISA was not seen to be endorsing or supporting any individual candidate(s).</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator noted that Career Staff members had been reminded that they must avoid saying or doing anything that could be perceived as discrimination or favouritism. The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also noted that Career Staff members had been reminded to be even more mindful of their interactions with Student Officers during the elections process.</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator explained that Student Staff members were allowed to engage and participate in the 2026 Student Elections in their capacity as a UHI student but needed to remain impartial whilst carrying out the duties for which they are employed in order to help ensure that HISA was not seen to be endorsing or supporting any individual candidate(s). The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also explained the Student Staff members were prohibited from using any resources that they have access to because of their role, including HISA staff branded items, in order to help ensure that HISA was not seen to be endorsing or supporting any individual candidate(s).</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator highlighted that all HISA employees, including Student Officers, were required to direct any student encountering any issues or problems voting or nominating themselves in the 2026 Student Elections to contact elections.hisa@uhi.ac.uk directly for assistance.</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator explained that only the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) was authorised to provide clarifications or interpretations of the election rules and that under no circumstance should any other HISA employee, including Student Officers, provide clarifications or interpretations of the election rules. The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also explained that requests for a clarification or interpretation of the election rules needed to be emailed to elections.hisa@uhi.ac.uk.</p> <p>The Insight & Democracy Coordinator highlighted that students could find out more information about the 2026 Student Elections by checking out the 2026 Student Elections Nominations Pack at www.hisa.uhi.ac.uk/elections/. The Insight & Democracy Coordinator also highlighted that nominations would close at noon (12:00) on Thursday 19th February 2026.</p>
<p>3.2 Recommended Principles for Student Involvement in UHI Governance (Board of Management Project)</p>	<p>The Students' Association President reminded members that today was the deadline for providing the Development Manager (Perth & Moray) feedback on the proposed recommended principles for Student involvement in UHI governance.</p> <p>The Students' Association President noted that the Board of Management Project (BoM) was a really important area of work for the Students' Association and that all Local Officers needed to let the Development Manager (Perth & Moray) know what they thought about the proposed recommended principles for Student involvement in UHI governance.</p>

	<p>ACTION: Executive Committee members to provide the Development Manager (Perth & Moray) feedback on the proposed recommended principles for Student involvement in UHI governance via email (aimee.cuthbert@uhi.ac.uk) by 4pm today, Monday 19th January 2026.</p>
<p>3.3 Future Executive Committee Meeting Dates & Deadlines</p>	<p>The Students' Association President highlighted that the dates for the Executive Committee meetings in March and May would be set once all Local Officers had confirmed the details of their working hours with their Development Manager for semester two. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the dates and times for the informal meetings of Executive Committee members in February and April would be set once all Local Officers had confirmed the details of their working hours with their Development Manager for semester two.</p> <p>The Students' Association President reminded members to email the Insight & Democracy Coordinator the details of their semester two working hours as soon as they had confirmed them with their Development Manager.</p> <p>ACTION: Executive Committee members to email the Insight & Democracy Coordinator (Paul.Stalker@uhi.ac.uk) as soon as possible the details of members working hours for semester two.</p>