

Meeting Minutes

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

Meeting Da	eeting Date 24 th September 2025			
Meeting Tin	12.00-13.30			
Attendance				
Present	Xander McDade, Students' Association President (Chair) Holly Pearce, Vice President Education Craig Ward, Argyll Depute President Chloe Young, Inverness President Andi Garrity, Perth President Millie Foster, Perth Depute President Hannah Lehmann, Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) Depute President Harley Green, Shetland Depute President			
Apologies	Alasdair Macleod, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (Island) Cole Garscadden, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (North) Abigail Teague, North, West & Hebrides Depute President (West) Mila Tabone, Orkney Depute President			
Absent	Susan Loughlin, Highland Theological College (HTC) Depute President Emmaleigh Hay, Moray Depute President			
Attended	Rachel Burn, Chief Executive 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 North, West & Hebrides Depute President (Islands), the North, West & Hebrides Depute President (North), and the Orkney Depute President had sent their apologies in advance.
1.2 Draft July Executive Committee Meeting Minutes	The Chair made reference to the draft minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on Wednesday 30 th July 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 highlighted that the August informal meeting of Executive Committee took place on Wednesday 27 th August 2025. The Students' Association President asked if any member objected to marking the action to email the Insight & Democracy Coordinator the details of their working hours in August once they had confirmed them with their Development Manager as being complete. The Students' Association President noted that they would mark the action as being complete.
2	Representation & Student Engagement
2.1 Draft UHI Strike Statement	The Students' Association President highlighted that a statement had been drafted in response to the recent announcement that University & College Union (UCU) staff members in UHI's Executive Officer were balloting on industrial action. The Students' Association President explained that UHI University & College Union (UCU) branch members in UHI's Executive Office were balloting on industrial action in response to UHI's plan to make sixteen compulsory redundancies within the Executive Office. The Students' Association President highlighted that the draft statement expressed disappointment with UHI for going down the route of compulsory redundancies while acknowledging the reasons behind the redundancies. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the draft statement included a call for UHI's Senior Management Team and the University & College Union (UCU) to get around the table to avert industrial action. The Students' Association President highlighted that they and the Chief Executive were meeting weekly with UCU's UHI Branch in order to keep up-to-date with developments regarding this industrial dispute. The Students' Association President noted that UCU's UHI Branch had launched a petition (https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/save-uhi-stop-the-cuts) yesterday as part of industrial dispute with UHI. The Students' Association President ask members if they had any comments or feedback about the approach and tone of draft strike statement. Students' Association President noted they were looking to incorporate into the draft statement a call for fairer Further Education and Higher Education funding in Scotland following a suggestion from the North, West & Hebrides Depute President (Island). The Students' Association President asked members if they would be happy for the statement to go up on HISA's website and social media channels once a call for fairer Further Education and Higher Education funding in Scotland wa

The Students' Association President noted that they would revise the draft statement to include a call for fairer Further Education and Higher Education funding in Scotland and would circulate to members before sharing on HISA's website and social media channels.

ACTION: Students' Association President to revise the draft UHI Strike Statement to include a call for fairer Further Education and Higher Education funding in Scotland.

ACTION: Students' Association President to circulate a copy of the revised UHI Strike Statement to Executive Committee members.

The Students' Association President highlighted that HISA was currently a member of the National Union of Students (NUS).

The Students' Association President explained that the National Union of Students (NUS) was an association of around 400 Students' Unions/ Students' Associations in the UK.

The Students' Association President also explained that although the majority of Students' Associations/ Students' Unions in Scotland were member of the National Union of Students (NUS), a number of Students' Associations/ Students' Union including Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) and Queen Margaret University Students' Union (QMUSU) were not members.

The Students' Association President outlined that they wanted HISA to hold a referendum during the 2025-26 academic year on National Union of Students (NUS) membership because they no longer felt that it presented value for money.

The Students' Association President highlighted that they felt that membership no longer presented value for money for HISA due to recent changes and events within the National Union of Students (NUS).

2.2 NUS Disaffiliation Referendum Proposal

The Students' Association President noted that there had a been significant reductions in the internal democracy of the National Union of Students (NUS) over recent years. The Students' Association President also noted that over recent years students and staff members had noticed a notable decline in both the amount of campaigning undertaken by and the quality of training provided by the National Union of Students (NUS).

The Students' Association President highlighted that they also felt that the National Union of Students (NUS) no longer presented value for money for HISA in the context of the financial challenges the Students' Association currently faced.

The Students' Association President noted that that HISA was currently facing significant financial pressures and needed to make savings to both its Student Officer and staff costs. The Students' Association President also noted that HISA currently paid a total of £22,228.55 a year for its membership of the National Union of Students (NUS), an amount that was nearly equivalent to the salary of a Cross-Campus Officer or a Local Coordinator.

The Students' Association President highlighted that they felt that HISA would need to make deeper cuts elsewhere within its budget if it continued to maintain its membership of the National Union of Students (NUS).

The Students' Association President explained that they felt that given both the recent changes within the National Union of Students (NUS) and the

financial challenges HISA faced, it was important to ask UHI students whether they felt continued membership was value for money.

The Students' Association President explained that membership for the National Union of Students (NUS) ran on an annual rolling basis between the 1st of January and the 31st of December. The Students' Association President also explained that any Students' Association/ Students' Union wishing to leave the National Union of Students (NUS) needed to give written notice before the 1st of July in order to allow the membership to end after the 31st of December of that year.

The Students' Association President highlighted that any Students' Association/ Students' Union that failed to give the National Union of Students (NUS) the required six months' notice of their intent to leave incurred a financial penalty equating to one year's membership fees. The Students' Association President also highlighted that Friday 1st January 2027 was currently the earliest date that HISA could leave the National Union of Students (NUS) without having to pay this financial penalty.

The Students' Association President explained that HISA would have to hold a referendum as part of any process to leave the National Union of Students (NUS) as a financial penalty equating to two year's membership fees was incurred if a Students' Association/ Students' Union chose to leave NUS via any process other than a secret all student vote ballot.

The Students' Association President highlighted that under HISA's Articles of Association the quoracy for any referendum was 400 members, which equated to roughly around half the turnout at the 2025 Student Elections.

The Students' Association President asked if members had any comments or questions about their proposal to hold a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership during the 2025-26 academic year.

The Argyll Depute President asked if there would be any negative impact on UHI students if HISA decided to leave the National Union of Student (NUS). The Argyll Depute President also asked what services would be lost if HISA decided to leave the National Union of Student (NUS).

The Students' Association President explained that the National Union of Students (NUS) was more of a union for Student's Associations/ Student's Union's than students and as such didn't really offer many direct services for students.

The Students' Association President noted that if HISA was to leave NUS UK the Students' Association would lose the ability to take an active part in NUS campaigns as well as lose its rights to send representatives to NUS Scotland and NUS UK conferences The Students' Association President also noted that if HISA was to leave NUS Charity the Student's Association would lose access to a number of services provided by NUS Charity including the elections and referendum Returning Officer (RO) service and the constitutional and governance support service.

The Students' Association President highlighted that there might be some additional costs to leaving the National Union of Students (NUS) to cover the services currently provided by NUS Charity.

The Students' Association President noted that students at non-affiliated Students' Association/ Students' Unions were currently able to purchase NUS's TOTUM card. The Students' Association President also noted there were a number of free alternative student cards available to UHI students.

The Perth President noted that they felt that the National Union of Students (NUS) events and training sessions that they had attended didn't really have much value beyond the opportunity to network with other Student Officers in Scotland. The Perth President also noted that they felt that they had gotten much more out of events and training session delivered by other organisations such as Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs).

The Students' Association President also noted that they personally felt that had been a significant decline in the quality of National Union of Students (NUS) events over the last decade, especially in regards to conferences and training workshops. The Students' Association President also noted that they personally felt that there would be more value in using some of the money currently being spent on NUS membership on sending more Student Officers to events like 'That's Quality!' run by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (spargs).

The Perth President noted that they felt that the NUS Scotland's *Fix Student Housing* campaign had mainly been led and run by Student Officers at other Students' Associations/ Students' Unions in Scotland rather than by NUS Officers or staff members.

The Students' Association President noted that they personally felt that there had been a notable decline over recent years in the amount of campaigning the National Union of Students (NUS) had undertaken.

The Students' Association President asked members if they supported the principal of holding a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership during the 2025-26 academic year. The Students' Association President also asked members whether they felt the referendum should be limited to membership of NUS UK.

The Argyll Depute President, the Perth President, the Perth Depute President, the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) Depute President, and Shetland Depute President indicated that they supported the principal of holding a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership during the 2025-26 academic year.

The Students' Association President highlighted that they wanted to know which route members felt should be used to trigger a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership.

The Students' Association President explained that there were three routes for triggering a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership during the 2025-26 academic year: a resolution of the Board of Trustees, a majority vote at an All Student Meeting, or a secure petition signed by at least 100 members. The Students' Association President also explained that there were pros and Cons for each using each of these three routes to trigger a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership.

The Students' Association President noted that while a resolution of the Trustees was currently the easiest and simplest route to trigger a referendum on National Union of Student (NUS) membership, the Board of Trustees were likely to view such a decision as being a political one for the membership to make. The Students' Association President also noted that while a secure petition signed by at least 100 members was currently the most democratically legitimate route to trigger a referendum on National Union of Student (NUS) membership, it would complex and time-consuming, involving additional workload for both Student Officers and Students' Association staff members.

The Students' Association President highlighted that while triggering a referendum on National Union of Student (NUS) membership via a majority vote at an All Student Meeting would not involve any significant additional workload for Student Officers or Students' Association staff members, the Articles and Schedules currently lacked the basic rules needed to run an All Student Meeting that would have any real authority or legitimacy. The Students' Association President also highlighted that unlike other Students' Associations/ Students' Unions HISA didn't currently have any principals or practice in place around how secure petitions should be conducted.

The Students' Association President asked members if they had any preference over which route to trigger a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership. The Students' Association President also asked if members if they had any comments or feedback about any of the three routes to trigger a referendum.

The Argyll Depute President noted that they felt that a secure petition signed by at least 100 members would be the best route for triggering a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership because it had the greatest degree of democratic legitimacy.

The Inverness President noted that they felt that a resolution of the Board of Trustees would be the best route for triggering a referendum given that the workloads for both Student Officers and Students' Association staff members were already stretched. The Inverness President also noted that they didn't think they would have the time to be able to go out and get students to sign a secure petition.

The Argyll Depute President noted that they felt that a majority vote at an All Student Meeting would be the second best route for triggering a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership in terms of democratic legitimacy.

The Argyll Depute President question whether it would be logistically possible to run a proper All Student Meeting given the issues with the Students' Association's Articles and Schedules.

The Students' Association President noted that the Students' Association had ran an Annual All Student Meeting during the 2024-25 academic year and was currently looking at holding the Annual All Student Meeting for the 2025-26 in either November or early December.

The Inverness President noted that they felt that triggering a referendum via a majority vote at an All Student Meeting would be a good middle way of ensuring democratic legitimacy without significantly increasing the workloads for either Student Officers or Students' Association staff members.

The Students' Association highlighted that the North, West & Hebrides Depute President (Island) had indicated to them that their preferred route for triggering a referendum on National Union of Student (NUS) membership was either a resolution of the Board of Trustees or a secure petition signed by at least 100 members.

The Students' Association President noted that their preferred route for triggering a referendum on National Union of Student (NUS) membership was a majority vote at an All Student Meeting because it ensured democratic legitimacy without significantly increasing the workloads for either Student Officers or Students' Association staff members.

The Students' Association President asked members to vote on their preferred route for triggering a referendum on National Union of Students (NUS) membership.

VOTE RESULTS:

A resolution of the Board of Trustees.	2
A majority vote at an All Student Meeting.	4
A secure petition signed by at least 100 members.	3

The Students' Association President noted that they would develop a motion on whether to hold a referendum on NUS membership that could be debated and voted on at an All Student Meeting. The Students' Association President also noted that they would work with both the Insight & Democracy Coordinator and the Operations & Governance Coordinator to identify a suitable date and time in November or December to hold this academic year's Annual Student All Student Meeting.

ACTION: Students' Association President to develop a motion for an All Student Meeting on whether to hold a referendum on NUS membership during the 2025-26 academic year.

ACTION: Students' Association President to work with the Insight & Democracy Coordinator and the Operations & Governance Coordinator to identify a suitable date and time in November or December to hold the Annual Student All Student Meeting.

The Students' Association President highlighted that UHI and its Academic Partners, like the majority of colleges and universities in Scotland, had been struggling with rising inflation and flat public funding over recent years.

The Students' Association President explained that HISA's block grant had not increased for a number of years due to the financial position of UHI and its Academic Partners had been advised by UHI that this was likely to be the position again in the coming years.

The Students' Association President highlighted that the lack of increased funding from UHI and its Academic Partners represented a year on year real terms cut in HISA's funding once the increased operating costs caused by inflation were taken into account.

2.3 Student Officer Restructure Proposal

The Students' Association President noted that HISA needed to make savings to ensure the organisation was sustainable in current funding environment.

The Students' Association President highlighted that a number of changes had been made in recent years to make HISA more sustainable including reducing the number of Student Officer roles and reducing the term of office for newly elected Local Officers from 12 months to ten months. The Students' Association President also highlighted that in light of the current funding environment further changes across the organisation needed to be made to make HISA more sustainable in the medium to long term.

The Students' Association President noted that HISA's Board of Trustees wanted to use the 2025-26 academic year to agree changes that would make HISA more sustainable.

The Students' Association President highlighted that they and the Vice President Education in their role as Officer Trustees had developed with the Chief Executive a proposal for the Board of Trustees to discuss on how the current Student Officer model could be restructured to make it more sustainable.

The Students' Association President noted that a lot of time and effort had gone into the development the Officer Restructure Proposal. The Students' Association President also noted that a number of different approaches and options around Student Officers had been discussed during the development of Officer Restructure Proposal, including a move to introduce a Cross-Campus remit based Student Officer model.

The Students' Association President highlighted that the aim of the Officer Restructure Proposal was to maintain local level representation as best as possible while achieving savings through a reduction in both Student Officer hours and headcount.

The Students' Association President explained that under the Officer Restructure Proposal UHI Inverness would lose one of its Local Officer roles but not lose any hours, with the remaining Local Officer becoming a full-time (35 hours) Student Officer role. The Students' Association President also explained that under the Officer Restructure Proposal UHI Moray would lose one of its Local Officer roles but would receive an additional five hours to make the remaining Local Officer role a full-time Student Officer role.

The Students' Association President highlighted that under the Officer Restructure Proposal UHI Perth would lose its ten hour part-time Local Officer role while retaining its full-time Local Officer role. The Students' Association President also highlighted that under the Officer Restructure Proposal the Local Officer roles at the Highland Theological College (HTC) and Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS) would drop from ten hours a week to seven hours a week.

The Students' Association President noted that for consistency it was proposed that all Local Officer role titles would include 'Depute President'.

The Students' Association President highlighted that the current Student Officer model was originally designed to have three Cross-Campus Officer roles and the that the removal of the third Cross-Campus Officer role had significantly reduced the organisation's full-time Student Officer capacity.

The Students' Association President noted that the proposed changes in the Officer Restructure Proposal would add much needed additional full-time Student Officer capacity while reducing the number of Student Officer hours a week from 271 hours to 261 hours. The Students' Association President also noted that the proposed changes in the Officer Restructure Proposal would add much needed additional full-time Student Officer capacity while reducing the direct and indirect operational cost of the current Student Officer model.

The Students' Association President explained that some of the savings achieved through the reduction in Student Officer hours and headcount would be used to reintroduce twelve month terms for newly elected Local Officers to better help support the Local Officer induction process and experience.

The Students' Association President highlighted that a conversation was currently taking place with UHI Orkney about reducing the Orkney Depute President's hours from twelve hours a week to ten due to the differing governance arrangements at the Academic Partner. The Students' Association President also highlighted that a conversation was currently taking

place with the Highland Theological College (HTC) over the future of the HTC Depute President role.

The Students' Association President noted that they and the Vice President Education wanted to know what members thought about the Officer Restructure Proposal before it went to next week's Trustee Board Meeting for discussion.

The Students' Association President asked members if they had any comments or feedback about the Officer Restructure Proposal.

The Shetland Depute President noted that they had concerns as to whether there was any demand for full-time Local Officer roles at UHI Inverness and UHI Moray. The Shetland Depute President questioned whether students at UHI Inverness or UHI Moray, especially those studying part-time, would be interested in taking a year out of their studies to undertake a full-time Local Officer role. The Shetland Depute President also questioned whether there was a demand for a full-time role at UHI Moray.

The Students' Association President highlighted that the feedback received over the years from Local Officers at UHI Inverness and UHI Moray was they found it very difficult to juggle the demands of their role while studying part-time. The Students' Association President also highlighted that UHI Moray was UHI's fourth largest academic partner and that there had been some capacity issues with the current number of Student Officer hours at UHI Moray over recent years.

The Perth President noted that although they supported the move back to twelve month terms of officer for Local Officers they had concerns over how UHI staff members within the affected Academic Partners would react to a reduction in the number of Local Officers at their institution.

The Perth President questioned how the second Student Board Member places at UHI Inverness, UHI Moray and UHI Perth would be filled if there was only one Local Officer.

The Students' Association President noted that the second Student Board Member places at UHI Inverness, UHI Moray and UHI Perth didn't need to be filled by a Local Officer and could instead be filled from either one of our existing pools of volunteers like Student Voice Reps (SVRs) or by a new volunteering role. The Students' Association also noted that the aim of the Officer Restructure Proposal was to maintain local representation as best as possible with the funding provided by UHI and it's Academic Partners.

The Inverness President noted that although they felt that having a full-time Local Officer role at Inverness would be beneficial, they had concerns that the merging of the Inverness President and Inverness Depute President roles would remove the redundancy having to roles provided. The Inverness President also noted that they had concerns that having only one Local Officer role at Inverness would half the number of students being heard at important UHI Inverness meetings.

The Students' Association President highlighted that they were currently investigating the setting up of Student Committees at each academic partner so there was a pool of volunteers to attend import Academic Partner meetings.

The Students' Association President thanked members for their comments and feedback on Officer Restructure Proposal.

	The Students' Association President noted that they were happy for members to contact them following today's meeting with any additional comments or feedback on the Officer Restructure Proposal. The Students' Association President highlighted that they would ensure that members comments and feedback were fed into the Trustee's discussions about the Officer Restructure Proposal at next week's Trustee Board meeting.
3	AOCB
3.1 Student Voice Rep Recruitment	The Students' Association President highlighted that 237 Student Voice Reps had been recruited so far. The Students' Association President noted that this represented an overall increase in the number of Student Voice Reps compared to this time last year. The Students' Association President also noted that although there had been an overall increase in the number of Student Voice Reps compared to this time last year, the number of Student Voice Reps at some Academic Partners was done compared to this time last year. The Students' Association President highlighted that Student Voice Rep recruitment was an important area of activity for the Students' Association. The Students' Association President also highlighted that the Students' Association was looking to increase the number of Student Voice Reps across the UHI partnership. The Students' Association President explained that conducting class visits and lecture shout-outs was a great way for Local Officers to contribute to the recruitment of Student Voice Reps. The Students' Association President encouraged members to conducting class visits and lecture shout-outs to help contribute to the recruitment of Student Voice Reps.
3.2 UHI Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee Representatives	The Students' Association President noted that the UHI were looking for a Student Officer to sit on its Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee. The Students' Association President asked members to let them or the Vice President Education know if they were interested in becoming the HISA representative on UHI's Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee.
3.3 UHI Gaelic Committee Representatives	The Students' Association President noted that the UHI were looking for a Student Officer to sit on its Gaelic Committee. The Students' Association President asked members to let them or the Vice President Education know if they were interested in becoming the HISA representative on UHI's Gaelic Committee.
3.4 The Scottish Housing Bill	The Students' Association President expressed their appreciation and thanks towards the Perth President for their work on the Housing Bill campaign. The Students' Association President highlighted that the Perth President had cancelled some planned annual leave last week to work on the campaign when the Scottish Government announced that they were bring forward the third and final stage of debates and votes on the Housing Bill from November to this week.
3.5 Future Executive Committee	The Students' Association President explained that the dates and deadlines for future semester one Executive Committee meetings had not yet been set

Meeting Dates & Deadlines

as not all Local Officers had confirmed the details of their semester one working hours with the Insight & Democracy Coordinator.

The Students' Association President ask all members who had not yet confirmed the details of their semester one working hours with the Insight & Democracy Coordinator to do so by 5pm Monday 29th September 2025.

The Students' Association President highlighted that the dates and deadline for the November and January Executive Committee meetings as well as dates for the informal meeting of Executive Committee members in October and December would be set once all Local Officers had confirmed the details of their working hours with the Insight & Democracy Coordinator.

ACTION: Local Officers to ensure that the Insight & Democracy Coordinator has the details of their semester one working hours by 5pm, Monday 29th September 2025.