UHI | PERTH

Board of Management

Minutes

Meeting reference: Board 2025-26/04
Date and time: Tuesday 23 June 2026 at 5.00pm
Location: Brahan Boardroom (Room 019)

Members present: Justine Mitchell, Chair, Board of Management
Sarah Cordwell, Board Member
John Doran, Board Member
Mary Fraser, Board Member
Deirdre Joy, Board Member (to Item 6.1)
Chris Lusk, Board Member
Ian Robotham, Board Member
Chris Whatley, Board Member
Catherine Etri, Interim Principal & Chief Executive (excepting Item 11)
Andi Garrity, Student Board Member
Patrick O'Donnell, Staff Board Member
Richard Fyfe, Staff Board Member
Ronnie Dewar, Trade Union Board Member

In attendance: Jill Elder, Depute Principal
Gail Dunn, Chief Financial Officer
Fiona Cameron, Interim Director of Finance
Sarah Reddie, Director of Finance
Xander McDade, Governance, Growth & Change Manager
Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board of Management
Simon Varwell, HISA (Items 6.5, 7.1 & 7.2 only)

Apologies: David Macluskey, Board Member
John McMullen, Board Member
Millie Foster, Student Board Member
Liz Stewart, UHI Court Observer

Observing: Corben Bruce, HISA Perth (excepting Item 11)

Chair: **Justine Mitchell**
Minute Taker: Ian McCartney
Quorum: 9

MINUTES

Item		Action
1.	**Welcome and Apologies** Chair welcomed all to the meeting, noted apologies, and noted that Corben Bruce, HISA Deputy President Elect, who would be observing the meeting prior to taking up his role within HISA from 1st July. Chair advised of the recent resignation of Rosie Howie from the Board, and conducted round-table introductions.	
2.	**Additions to the Agenda** No additional items were added to the Agenda, however Clerk advised of a change to the running order, with Item 11 being moved to immediately follow Item 5.	
3.	**Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item** There were no Declarations of Interest noted.	
4.	**Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 31 March 2026** Minutes were approved as being an accurate record of the meeting.	
5.	**Matters Arising from Previous Minutes** <u>Board of Management meeting, 19 January 2026</u> <u>Item 7.8 – Removal & Relocation Expenses Policy</u> Board were advised that no progress had been made on this item, and the matter would be deferred to the next meeting. No progress advised.	
11.	**Principal Recruitment Process – RESERVED BUSINESS** Chair referred to Paper 12 provided within the Board Papers, noted the current contractual position and set out the two main options available to the Board as laid out within the paper. Following debate of the relative merits of the two options provided, Board **AGREED** to extend the contract of the Interim Principal by 2 years to 31 July 2028. Board further **AGREED** that a strategy for recruitment should be put in place at the earliest opportunity in order to commence talent spotting and/or succession planning; Chair to work with GGC Manager re timetable and inclusion of key stakeholders in the process.	Chair

6.1	**UHI Accord** Chair noted Paper 2 as circulated to Board re the UHI Accord, plus the associated management response notes, and further noted the apparent pressure being put on UHI to move the process to the next stage. Chair advised that concerns had been raised directly around some of the principles outlined, including shared services, without a robust business case. Interim Principal noted that the Accord calls for openness in the way the Partnership works, but there remains no information about the Top-Slice. A new formula is now being used to calculate the top slice, albeit under a different title and not agreed by the Finance Directors, and the changes in this calculation would see UHI Perth paying an extra £200,000. Interim Principal further noted that work undertaken around UHI Perth's International work needs to be protected given the significant time and effort that UHI Perth has spent developing meaningful international relationships. Chair noted the timing of an Extraordinary Board meeting next week, with UHI in attendance, to discuss the matter, therefore the purpose the item today is to raise concerns and ask any questions with a view to seeking further information if required from UHI to allow a fuller discussion. Board Member queried the phrase "sustainable University community" and whether the use of "University" and not "Tertiary" meant a clear focus on HE. Additionally, the tone around behaviours indicated this was not what most would consider to be an "Accord" document. Staff Board Member advised that the language utilised resonates with the UHI 2030 Strategy, and there are chunks of the Strategy document repeated in the Accord paper. Chair noted that the timescale for formal response does allow the opportunity to look at ways to move things forward and provide potential amendments/proposals to UHI. Board Member suggested that UHI Perth write to UHI Court agreeing to support the UHI Accord as a statement of intent and commitment to partnership working, whilst recognising that detailed proposals relating to shared services, academic structures, financial arrangements and transformation activity will require separate considerations, scrutiny and approval as they emerge. Interim Principal suggested that UHI Perth only sign the document if clarity is provided around key issues as discussed. Board **AGREED** with this position, with Interim Principal to pull more detail around key issues ahead of Extraordinary Board next week.	Interim Principal

6.2	**UHI Perth Budget 2026/27** Chief Financial Officer presented Paper 3 for Board approval, noting that a draft version of the Budget had been presented to Finance & Resources Committee, however this final version incorporates changes made subsequent to this meeting, plus additional queries from the Committee, which have been addressed. Chief Financial Officer advised that, while a small surplus was being budgeted, there was a level of cautiousness in some of the income figures until the Commercial Strategy is implemented. On the expenditure side, Centre for Mountain Studies was still included in the staff costs which is a significant variance from the Financial Recovery Plan, and Estates are making a saving based on £400k of their maintenance repairs spend being capitalised via the SFC Estates Grant. Chief Financial Officer further advised that, in terms of Cashflow position, only December 2026 falls below the target cashflow position, however it was indicated that an advance from UHI Executive Office would be available if required to retain cashflow targets. Chief Financial Officer noted that Pension Scheme revaluations were expected to take place around the end of the calendar year, which may impact on Employer Contribution rates for both utilised pension schemes. Chief Financial Officer further noted that the forecast for years beyond 2026/27 is based on a “do nothing” position based on current assumptions. Chair of Finance & Resources Committee acknowledged the hard work of the Finance Team in getting a Budget prepared for Board approval before the end of the financial year, and noted the importance of recognising the investment that has taken place this year without necessarily having concrete plans for the income growth, however being able to tie those two pieces together in future will be key. Board **APPROVED** UHI Perth Budget 2026/27.	
6.3	**Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee** Clerk presented Paper 4 in absence of Chair of Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee, highlighting the justifications for discontinuing the Committee, which focused on the Committee having a specific focus to provide assurance to both Board and the Regional Strategic Body that there was a plan in place that was being robustly monitored. Clerk noted the crossover between the Recovery Planning Monitoring Committee and the Finance & Resources Committee, and there is a strong opportunity now to reduce that duplication by absorbing the monitoring of the Financial Recovery Plan within the standard business	

	of the Finance & Resources Committee and making sure that there are mechanisms to flag up any particular issues regarding achievement of the Financial Recovery Plan at the earliest available opportunity to the Board. Board Member noted that Paper 11b identifies that the last meeting of the Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee was not quorate and Paper 4 seems to have originated from that. Board Member sought clarification that the proposal had full agreement from the Committee. Clerk confirmed that there was strong agreement form those present at the meeting that the Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee had served its course, and advised that the Chair of the Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee wrote to the Chair of the Board proposing this be taken forward following the meeting. Clerk also clarified that it is Board's decision whether or not to remove the Committee. Chair of Finance & Resources Committee noted disappointment that the first time that this matter had been highlighted was in the meeting pack and that there was no discussion with Chair of Finance & Resources Committee about the proposal. Clerk accepted responsibility for this oversight. Board **APPROVED** Paper 4.	
6.4	**Board & Committee Meeting Schedule 2026/27** Clerk presented Paper 5, noting that 2 schedules had been presented due to the preceding paper affecting the final schedule. Clerk noted that there was still opportunity to amend the schedule should any clashes be identified. Clerk highlighted the scheduled joint meeting of Finance & Resources and Audit Committees on Monday the 7th of December, which will very much heavily depend on whether the various audits are ready and available at that time and that joint meeting has had to be moved on a number of previous occasions. Chief Financial Officer advised that these audits will be ready in time for the proposed date. Chair of Finance & Resources queried whether there was advantage in proactively building in a little bit more between the combined Finance & Resources and Audit Committees and the subsequent Board of Management meeting, given there have been issues previously, resulting in some last-minute rearranging of meetings. Clerk noted the end-December deadline for sign-off of the accounts, which the College had not met in several years, rules out delaying the Board Meeting to a later date, and noted the previous statement from the Chief Financial Officer that the audits will be ready by the end of November to be included in the joint meeting papers – this should provide ample time between the joint meeting and the Board of	

	Management to allow for any internal scrutiny to take place of the reports, and minor corrections, to take place. Board discussed potential dates for the Board Away Day which had yet to land on a scheduled date. Board **APPROVED** Paper 5 in principle, subject to further review of potential dates provided.	
6.5	**HISA – Review of Articles of Association** Chair welcomed Simon Varwell, Director of Student Engagement and Representation (DSER) at the Highlands & Islands Students' Association (HISA) to present the next 3 papers to Board. DSER (HISA) presented Paper 6, which sought to address information that was missing, outdated, conflicting and contradictory, or unnecessarily complex and duplicating, within HISA's Articles of Association. DSER (HISA) noted that the paper presented does not present a substantive change, bar three small technical changes listed in the cover note, and further noted that the amendments require approval from local Boards within UHI as HISA are accountable to all UHI's governing bodies under the terms of the 1994 Education Act. There being no questions or points of clarification requested, Board **APPROVED** Paper 6.	
7.1	**HISA Elections Report 2026** DSER (HISA) presented Paper 7, noting that each of the UHI Board of Management have a duty to ensure that the Students' Association is operating its democratic processes in a fair, transparent and reasonable way, and that the Report being presented about HISA's elections allows for discussion on key issues. Chair advised that elections turnout and numbers of candidates was an ongoing area of concern for the Board, and sought understanding of the reasons for this. DSER (HISA) noted a number of reasons for the low turnout, including staffing capacity within HISA, the student population being non-traditional, and the time of the year for By-Elections taking place. DSER (HISA) noted that work was ongoing with Academic Partners to raise HISA's profile on campus which should have a knock-on effect around elections turnout. Board Member noted that the turnout was recorded at 3.75%, and asked specifically what was going to be done to address this given the high levels of engagement with Student Voice Reps. DSER (HISA)	

	advised that the turnout levels for cross-campus officers of 600-700 were not incomparable with other institutions and provided a healthy mandate for those officers, however HISA is undergoing some significant internal restructuring and does not expect to be in the same position next spring. Interim Principal queried whether reintroducing local college staff to polling stations would help. DSER (HISA) advised that staffing of polling stations at Perth was not an issue, and there was some nervousness around college staff on polling stations due to lack of accountability and potential confusion of message, however it would be useful for staff to ensure HISA can access classes to promote nominations and voting at elections. Board Member noted that OBIs, SVRs and clubs and societies seem to gain traction in terms of engagement, so why note elections? Student Board Member noted that there was a lack of a progression route – it's a big leap from being a Student Voice Rep to being a full-time officer, and the lack of a part-time officer role may be a deterrent. Board Member described the turnout levels as appalling and noted the risk of stakeholder voices not being represented. Board Member noted that the turnout levels suggest something is systematically wrong and would like to see some specific targets set to address this. Chair observed that, given polling is online and therefore little barrier to actually voting, this implies that awareness of the elections is simply not getting through to students. Chair requested that HISA consider setting out what it is they propose to do to address the issue. DSER (HISA) advised that the HISA Trustee Board will be setting Key Performance Indicators at its next meeting, which will include indicators around Elections, however HISA is keen to stress that elections turnout is not the only indicator of a "good" students' association, and there needs also to be a focus on areas such as improved engagements around Student Voice Reps and Clubs & Societies. Chair requested that HISA provide something in writing to the Board over the summer period based on this discussion, to include targets. DSER (HISA) agreed to supply a follow-up. Board **NOTED** Paper 7	DSER (HISA)
7.2	**HISA Perth Report** HISA Perth presented Paper 8 for information. There being no questions or points of clarification requested Board **NOTED** Paper 8, and expressed thanks to out-going Student Board Members.	

7.3	**Chair's Report** Interim Chair provided a verbal update on key induction-based activities since taking office, and noted that a formal update paper would be provided to future Board Meetings.	
7.4	**Interim Principal's Report** Interim Principal provided a verbal update on key activities, and advised that Board Members would be copied into an End of Semester update being provided to all staff, due to be issued later in the week. Interim Principal highlighted some issues that have recently been identified, in particular by the Scottish Government, that are an absolute priority for the college over the summer months: A priority for the Scottish Government is tackling child poverty, with 3 new projects identified in terms of what the funding capacity might be, and with every college in Scotland being given a mandate to participate in this. The 3 projects are: • **RISE** (Raising Income through Skills & Education) • **TAF** (Training Access Fund) and • **WDF** (Workforce Development Fund, replacing the Flexible Workforce Development Fund. This has to be evidence led Funding will be provided across six groups (minority and ethnic families, young parent families, lone parent families, families with disabled members, families with babies under a year old, and large families), and colleges will be given access to the data that relates to the Scottish Child Payment system. Colleges will no longer compete with other colleges for funding and UHI Perth will therefore only be given access to data that relates to Perth and Kinross. An initial £20k of funding budget will be allocated to work through administration processes in terms of reporting about what required to be done with those who are identified, which will require working very closely with our local authority partners and with the third sector to deliver what is required. The Scottish Funding Council will monitor progress on a monthly basis. Interim Principal emphasised the importance of these priority areas for the College going forward. Interim Principal also identified issues with fee information for postgraduate applications, and with the counting of FTEs within UHI due to an under-reflection in terms of the local numbers, however this now looks to be resolved.	

	Interim Principal advised Board of 4 nominations being submitted to the CDN Awards, including a submission for Student of the Year. Interim Principal advised that the Depute Principal is conducting a full-scale review of the meetings that take place on a regular basis with a view to optimising time and minimising duplication and overlap. And so that's underway. Depute Principal noted that there is also an ongoing review around ASW, with an Associate Trainer with a background in marketing and leisure engaged for 10 days work to review the end-to-end customer journey and providing recommendations for strategy as well as identifying some initial quick wins. Depute Principal updated Board on a recent 2-week trip to China and Vietnam with the Director of International Partnerships and the Sector Manager in Engineering & Aviation. Three pipeline partners. Were visited. • The College continues to move forward with Jingzhou University of Technology in terms of establishing an Institute' Jingzhou have made some significant investment in the facilities for the Institute, and the relationship will cover mechanical, electrical and aircraft engineering. The project is a big step forward the college it's expected that up to 100 student places will be created per year on each of those programmes. • Hubai Mechanical and Electrical Polytechnic are exploring delivery of electrical and the mechanical programmes on a TNE basis in there, and a financial agreement with them has been signed, with Curriculum Teams now working together to bring the project to fruition. • The Vietnam Aviation Academy shows a huge amount of potential there, with a new President who's very forward thinking and investment being made in their own campuses. The MBA Aviation will start there with a small initial cohort. There is potential to move into other untapped areas such as MBA Tourism, however they are also interested in our engineering undergraduate provision and the Part 66 license that we offer. Chair thanked Interim Principal and Depute Principal for their updates.	
7.5	**Procurement Report** Chair noted issues raised by Board Members regarding governance and oversight around Campus Transformation Officer procurement processes, so requested a paper on the matter to provide some clarity (presented as Paper 9), Chair opened floor to questions from Board on this matter. Chair F&R queried the total value of the contract, which was clarified by the Governance Growth & Change Manager.	

	Chair F&R sought clarification on the Non-Competitive Action (NCA) element of the contract. Interim Principal advised that an initial 3-month contract had been awarded under NCA upon recommendation from Procurement, however the 3-month period took the college over the recommendation threshold for NCA and the contract therefore required approval from SFC. Lessons have been learned from this error, and all Procurement proposals will now require to be processed via the Chief Financial Officer, with any grey areas around governance being routed through the Governance Growth & Change Manager. Chair F&R suggested that this matter should also be discussed with APUC in terms of their procurement consortium. Interim Principal advised that this was already in hand. Chair LEC queried when the contract was scheduled to end. Interim Principal advised that the 9-month extension would take the contract to a full year. Chair advised that the Campus Transformation Officer would be delivering a presentation to Board next week, which provides an opportunity to receive further information on what has been done to date and what is proposed going forward. Interim Principal noted that the SFC have been aware of the process right from the start, and it was all in their say so that we went ahead with the contract extension because they wanted to see a full feasibility study. However, there needs to be a limit on information that is being issued as the project is reliant on SFC authorisation to move further forward – if this does not happen, the contract will be terminated. Board Member queried what was being put in place to stop similar instances happening again around the lack of tendering processes. Governance Growth & Change Manager advised that additional processes were being put in place as described earlier, which will include ensuring that NCAs are the exception rather than the rule for procurement processes, and there will also be a wider review of the college's Financial Regulations, which will be presented to Board for approval. Board Member queried, given the capacity for the project to be extended beyond a year assuming SFC go-ahead, at what point the contract ceases. Chief Financial Officer advised that this would depend on the value of funding provided, and each stage in the process would require a fresh procurement process. It is also likely that the nature of a consultancy role would change at some point having more of a project management focus, which would require its own procurement. Board **NOTED** Paper 9.	

8.1	**Financial Forecast – Year to July 2026 as at 20 April 2026** Interim Director of Finance presented Paper 10 for information, and advised that a more accurate figure has now been provided around electricity costs, leading to a reduction in costs in this area.. There being no questions or points of clarification requested, Board **NOTED** Paper 10, and expressed thanks to Interim Director of Finance for her time at UHI Perth.	
9	**Strategic Plan 2027-2032** Due to pressures of time, it was **AGREED** that this item would be deferred to next meeting.	
10	**Standing Committee Summaries** Board received and **NOTED** summary reports from the following Committee meetings: • Recovery Plan Monitoring Committee – 20 April & 08 June 2026 • Learner Experience Committee –06 May 2026 • Finance & Resources Committee – 26 May 2026 • 08 June 2026	
12	**AOCB** No other business was tabled.	
13	**Date & Time of Next Meeting** • Extraordinary: Thursday 02 July 2026, 5:00pm • Scheduled: Tuesday 13 October 2026, 5:00pm	
14	**Review of Meeting** Board confirmed that the meeting had been conducted in line with the Terms of Reference.	

Information recorded in College minutes are subject to release under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A). Certain exemptions apply: financial information relating to procurement items still under tender, legal advice from College lawyers, items related to national security.

Notes taken to help record minutes are also subject to Freedom of Information requests, and should be destroyed as soon as minutes are approved.

Status of Minutes – Open (except Item 11, Paper 12)

An **open** item is one over which there would be no issues for the College in releasing the information to the public in response to a freedom of information request.

A **closed** item is one that contains information that could be withheld from release to the public because an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies.

The College may also be asked for information contained in minutes about living individuals, under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018. It is important that fact, rather than opinion, is recorded.

Do the minutes contain items which may be contentious under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018? **Yes** ☑ **No** ❒