

## Finance & Resources Committee

### Minutes

**Meeting reference:** F&R2024-25/04

**Date:** Wednesday 21 May 2025

**Location:** Online

**Members present:** Elaine Piggot, Chair  
Deirdre Joy, Board Member  
Ian Robotham, Board Member  
Alistair Wylie, Interim Chair of Board  
Richard Fyfe, Staff Board Member  
Xander McDade, Student Board Member

**In attendance:** Lynn Murray, Deputy Principal (Operations)  
Katy Lees, Director of HR and Organisational Development  
Jill Martin, Director of ICT  
Ian McCartney, Clerk to the Board  
Phil McNaul, Consultant

**Observers:** David Gourley, Director of Teaching, Learning and Quality Enhancement  
Christiana Margiotti, Director Curriculum  
Jane Lewis, UHI Vice-Principal for Strategic Projects

**Apologies:** Gavin Whigham, Director of Estates  
Nicki Inglis, Director of Curriculum  
Deborah Lally, Director of Student Experience

**Chair:** Elaine Piggot

**Minute Taker:** Ian McCartney

**Quorum:** 4

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**We will act with integrity in everything we do**

**Student Centred + Innovative + Ambitious + Respectful + Inclusive + Collaborative**

## **MINUTES**

Item		Action
	<p>Prior to commencement of formal business, Chair advised members on a range of housekeeping matters and shared expectations, with a particular focus on ensuring cover sheets for papers were clear and accurate, and expressed a preference that papers should be peer-reviewed where appropriate prior to issuing.</p> <p>Chair reinforced that Board members have an obligation to provide scrutiny and offer support to senior leadership while not interfering with operational matters</p> <p>Clerk briefed Committee on the current Terms of Reference, and members each provided an overview of their relevant experience to Committee.</p>	
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Additions to the Agenda</b></p> <p>There were no additions to the agenda.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Declaration of Conflict of Interest in any Agenda Item</b></p> <p>There were no declarations made.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting of Finance &amp; Resources Committee, 24 March 2025</b></p> <p>The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Matters Arising from previous minutes</b></p> <p>Chair noted that all items of Matters Arising would be dealt with within the respective Agenda Item.</p>	
6.1	<p><b>UHI Perth Management Accounts: Year to 30 April 2025 &amp; Forecast to 31 July 2025</b></p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) briefed Committee on the current position re the Internal Audit on budgeting processes, and on the current position re the External Audit Plan for year to 31 July 2025.</p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) advised Committee on a Section 22 notice from Audit Scotland, noting that the scope for this notice had not yet been agreed with the Auditor General therefore timescales</p>	

	<p>were not known. Depute Principal (Operations) further advised that notice of the Section 22 had been recorded on the Audit Scotland website. Interim Chair of Board reported that pre-emptive media had been drafted with UHI on this matter.</p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) advised that the Management Accounts to April 2025 were not available due to finance team focusing on Budget and Recovery Plan. UHI have been advised accordingly and are providing resource support.</p> <p>Chair queried whether all appropriate information would be provided to future Committee meetings. Depute Principal (Operations) advised that the plan was to produce monthly forecasts to the end of the current Financial Year.</p>	
<b>6.2</b>	<p><b>Mid-Year Review 2024/25</b></p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) presented the MYR, which had been submitted to SFC at the end of March. The forecast loss for AST was included in this figure as it is required within the FFR.</p> <p>Committee <b>NOTED</b> Paper 3.</p>	
<b>6.3 &amp; 7.1</b>	<p><b>UHI Perth Draft Budget 2025/26 &amp; Indicative Budgets 2026/27 and 2027/28; and UHI Perth Recovery Plan</b></p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) presented the current draft of the Budget per Paper 4, noting work done to progress the Budget, while expressing concern over predicted budget deficits and challenges presented without investment.</p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) advised that there would be a further review of the Budget prior to the June Board meeting to allow further exploration of risks and material variances.</p> <p>Student Board Member thanked Depute Principal (Operations) for work carried out to date, but noted concern re escalating deficits and sought understanding of how the current picture had been arrive at. Depute Principal (Operations) noted that errors previously identified re the 2024/25 budget forecast paper had been modelled over the next 3 years, and projected pay increases had been included, however income based on student numbers and credits had been projected to remain static.</p> <p>Board Member noted that the planned actions, while positive, would be hard to progress without investment, and reliance on International income may no longer be justifiable, therefore thought may need to be given to more fundamental changes to course delivery and structure. Chair noted that the Budget was the starting point for the Recovery Plan, and that the Interim Principal's key priorities will include income generation and cost reduction.</p>	

	<p>Chair queried whether issues around AST had been budgeted for. Depute Principal (Operations) advised that the AST Management Fee had been removed from the Budget, however alternative provision re the BSc course was noted as a risk, and only the current provision is provided in figures until some additional work can be concluded. Committee were advised that a figure range should soon be available, and that flagging assumptions with the RSB should suffice at this stage.</p> <p>With regards to the Recovery Plan, Depute Principal (Operations) advised that the Consultant supporting the work on the Recovery Plan was using data for the last 3 years and modelled for the next 3 years to allow work on ratios to provide flags in key areas. Data will be closely analysed before looking at options to ensure there is a narrative provided with a clear strategic objective and gap analysis.</p> <p>Consultant warned that the current trends were not positive, and that sustainability is not yet clear, however progress is being made on identifying the key areas to address. Consultant advised that the approach being taken is one that builds strong foundations rather than set unrealistic ambitions, however there will need to be a significant cost realignment and a need to identify all sources of income.</p> <p>Student Board Member noted reassurance had been provided by this process, in particular around the 3-year timescale, however the data around student numbers was extremely concerning and indicated a strong requirement to increase focus on those specialist areas where UHI Perth are sector leaders, and to identify where niche areas exist to fill gaps, which can only be delivered through growth.</p> <p>Board Member queried whether Budget assumptions were looking at the modelling of different scenarios. Consultant clarified that the Plan will be supported by cashflow projections that run scenarios with associated management actions, however this model is not quite ready yet.</p> <p>Chair concluded discussion by noting the likely requirement to call an additional round of F&amp;R and Board meetings in June.</p>	
<b>6.4</b>	<p><b>Staff &amp; Student Financial Information</b></p> <p>Director of HR presented Paper 5, which provided a summary of staff and student financial information to end April 2025. Consultant advised that the ratios provided looked out of step with the sector and these therefore need to be looked at within the Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Student Board Member queried the level of backfill indicated by the</p>	

	<p>numbers shown, and the impact of this on VFM for the scheme. Director of HR advised that the College has a higher level of long-term sick than experienced before, therefore it is harder to flex contracts, and extra staff are needed to provide cover.</p> <p>Chair requested that Director of HR to provide Organogram to further assist understanding of staffing issues.</p> <p>Board Member noted it would be useful to receive additional data around different fee status by sector. Depute Principal (Operations) advised that funding isn't provided based on that methodology, rather UHI provide an averaged amount per student/credit; SFC are currently looking at that model. Chair advised that this issue be taken forward via the Transitions Project.</p>	Director of HR
8.1	<p><b>Estates Planning SLWG – Interim Report</b></p> <p>Student Board Member presented Paper 6, which provided an update from the SLWG on Estates Planning. It was noted that the paper was issued late at short notice due to key data being received at short notice, therefore the SLWG had not yet reviewed the paper in full. Student Board Member drew particular attention to the discussions and proposals around the Goodlyburn Building.</p> <p>Following discussion around the key issues, Committee <b>accepted</b> the recommendations noted within the Cover Paper on the proviso that these remain draft recommendations until the report can be reviewed by the SLWG before being brought before the Board.</p>	
8.2	<p><b>Estates Update</b></p> <p>In the absence of the Director of Estates, Committee <b>noted</b> Paper 7, with any queries re Paper 7 to be directed to author.</p>	
9	<p><b>HR Update</b></p> <p>Director of HR presented Paper 8 for information, highlighting sections around the National Job Evaluation Project and the National Recognition Agreement, and noting that the Staff Survey had closed in April with a feedback report being presented to PLG next week.</p> <p>Director of HR advised that the Tayside Pension Fund agreement had not yet been signed, however this would be presented to Board for approval in June.</p> <p>Board Member queried whether the likely scale of the back-pay re the National Job Evaluation Project was known as yet. Director of HR advised that the numbers were not known and that the SFC were looking to amend how these were dealt with within annual accounts. Depute Principal (Operations) clarified that SFC had not</p>	

	<p>yet provided written commitment around their underwriting of proposed costs.</p> <p>Committee <b>noted</b> Paper 8.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Digital Transformation Update</b></p> <p>Director of ICT presented Paper 9, highlighting the Scottish Digital Strategy, and providing an update on the progress around teaching rooms.</p> <p>Committee <b>noted</b> Paper 9.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Student Consultation re Food &amp; Beverage Service On Campus</b></p> <p>Committee received a report of a student consultation exercise on food and beverage provision on campus, per Paper 10.</p> <p>Depute Principal (Operations) advised that the contract for catering was due to be brought before Board for approval, which may impact on how many of these recommendations can be taken forward.</p> <p>Chair suggested that the recommendation for this paper be for SLT to take account of the implications of the report; this approach was <b>agreed</b>. Depute Principal (Operations) was requested to liaise with Director of Estates to take this matter forward.</p>	Depute Principal (Operations)
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Committee Terms of Reference: EDIT</b></p> <p>Committee <b>APPROVED</b> Paper 11.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Committee Meetings</b></p> <p>The following Committee minutes were presented for information and <b>noted</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JNC for Lecturers, 05 March 2025</li> <li>• JNC for Support Staff, 18 April 2025</li> <li>• Perth Staff Group, 27 February 2025</li> <li>• Perth Staff Group, 26 March 2025</li> </ul>	
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Date &amp; Time of Next Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tbc</li> </ul>	
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Review of Meeting</b></p> <p>Committee confirmed that the meeting had been conducted in line with its Terms of Reference.</p>	

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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 ☒**

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** ☒