

**Student handbook – MSc Sustainable
Mountain Development**

Course code: U91L7

UHI | PERTH

**Centre for
Mountain Studies**



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Introduction

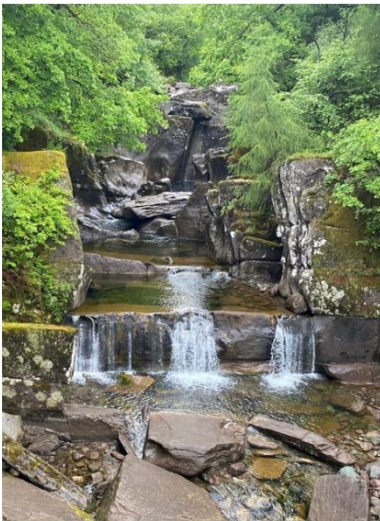
Welcome to the MSc Sustainable Mountain Development programme, an online course designed for individuals from diverse backgrounds, who share a deep interest in the environments and communities of mountain regions.

Sustainable development in mountain areas requires an understanding of environmental, ecological and socio-economic dynamics. Mountains are important as an integral component of landscapes at a range of scales. The biophysical attributes of mountains mean they provide distinctive environments that underpin the provision of essential ecosystem services and support highly diverse species assemblages. The environmental specificities of mountain areas have a strong influence on land management practices, livelihoods, services and infrastructure. Community development is inextricably linked with the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources in mountain areas.

Three core modules provide a strong foundation for meeting the programme learning outcomes. 'Global Mountain Geographies' introduces key environmental and social issues in mountain areas. A core knowledge of sustainable development concepts is developed through 'Understanding Sustainability Discourses', and insights into policy processes and applications are provided by 'Understanding the Policy Environment'.

Students then select a further three optional modules to deepen their understanding of biophysical systems and their management (Sustainable Land Use, Water Resources in a Changing Climate, Biodiversity Management, Extreme Weather, Sustainable Deer Management, Agroecology: Regenerative Food Systems) and/or community development (Communities, Nature & Sustainability, Working with Communities, The Economics of Community Wealth Building). If the student plans to progress to the Research Dissertation module, it is highly recommended that a research methods module is selected as an option (Quantitative research and data analysis or Qualitative inquiry). It is also possible to take an elective module from another programme if alternative options are desirable.

Mountain areas are highly valuable yet fragile and vulnerable environments. The impacts of climate change are all too evident in the retreat of glaciers, changes in weather patterns and species range shifts. Mountains are the ‘water towers’ of the world and subject to complex change in hydrological regimes. Graduates from this programme will be equipped to understand the complex interactions in mountain systems and be able to apply this learning across a range of professional sustainable development roles and global contexts.



Course Summary: Aims and Objectives

The programme aims to provide an advanced level of understanding and professional competence across the range of sustainable development skills required within mountain environments. Students are offered an opportunity to specialise to a limited extent by selection of modules from a common pool. They can also choose one elective module from across UHI's portfolio of postgraduate provision during the Diploma stage providing they meet pre-requisites for the relevant module. Students are required to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes for each module by successfully completing the relevant diet of assessment in accordance with UHI's postgraduate assessment regulations.

The overall aim is to produce graduates with a wide-ranging understanding of the integration between disciplines as well as a detailed knowledge of individual subject content, so that they have the advanced knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for employment relating to mountain areas.

The programme is approved for international delivery.

Specific learning outcomes

On completion of the requisite modules for the award of an MSc, or either of the intermediate awards of Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma, participants will be able to:

- demonstrate awareness and critical understanding of economic, social, and environmental issues and their integration through theory and practice at local, regional and global scales;
- understand the significance of mountain systems and their role in wider landscapes, particularly in relation to global change
- critically analyse the concept of 'sustainable development' and reflect upon its relevance and its application to mountain areas by applying relevant knowledge, understanding, and skills from diverse perspectives, international contexts, and academic disciplines;

Student handbook – MSc Sustainable Mountain Development

- evaluate the effects of local, national and international mountain development policies;
- evaluate and compare the effectiveness of different approaches to mountain development and resource management;
- propose approaches which integrate theory and practice in a variety of contemporary mountain sustainable development situations;
- design and conduct investigation and research, that provide critical insights into contemporary issues in mountain areas.

There is a graded progression through the core modules, the chosen optional modules and the dissertation.

Disclaimer!

Although we attempt to ensure that all information is accurate at the time of creation of this handbook, this programme may be subject to revisions during the year.



University of Highlands and Islands (UHI)

UHI is a regional college and university partnership, serving the communities of the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire.

We cover the largest geographical area of any campus-based university or college in the UK and have one of the largest student populations in Scotland, at over 36,000 - 30% of these studying at higher education level and 70% at further education level.

We are the only university and college partnership wholly based in our operating area and our dispersed communities rely on us. We offer flexible and supported learning from access level to PhD, as well as research opportunities rooted in place and purpose.

The diversity and flexibility of our partnership is our greatest strength, allowing us to deliver more. We are proud of our unique place and deep roots in our communities and this makes our teaching and research more connected to their needs.

The 12 partner colleges and research institutions (academic partners) that make up UHI are fascinating in their diversity. Visit the [Campuses](#) page of the UHI website to see a map of Scotland with UHI's partners indicated; you can also visit the [Research units](#) page to see a map of the locations of the many research units.

On the maps linked above, each name is a link and you can, if you wish, click on them to learn more about them. The nice thing about this map is the realisation that you will be studying with students from many of these places.

Programme information

Programme information	
Programme title	MSc Sustainable Mountain Development
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time: 2 years @ 30-36 hours per week (6 taught modules followed by MSc research project) • Part-time: 3-6 years @ 10-36 hours per week (10-12 hours per week per module, dependent on study mode/module selection)* • Part-time modular: 15 weeks @ 10-12 hours per week (per module) <p>Number of hours per week indicates the total number of hours you should dedicate to the course. This includes time online to view weekly lectures and other online materials, to participate in module discussion boards, and your own time spent on individual study and research.</p> <p>*Study mode examples as below – hours per week are dependent on how many modules you choose to study per semester:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3–4 years @ 2-3 modules per academic year followed by MSc research project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10-24 hours per week (1-2 modules per semester) ○ 10-36 hours per week (1-3 modules per semester) • 5–6 years @ 1-2 modules per academic year followed by MSc research project - please note: this option should only be taken if you are

	<p>self/employer-funded. See Fees/Funding tab for more information on funding limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10-12 hours per week (1 module per semester) ○ 10-24 hours per week (1-2 modules per semester)
Accredited by	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
SCQF level	Postgraduate Study – SCQF Level 11

Programme Team

Programme Leader & Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)

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Course Administrator

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Module Leaders

Communities, Nature & Sustainability

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The Economics of Community Wealth Building

David Skene



Agroecology: Regenerative Food Systems
David Skene

Biodiversity Management

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Sustainable Deer Management

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Sustainable Land Use

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Water Resources in a Changing Climate

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Global Mountain Geographies

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Understanding Sustainability Discourses

Rebecca Smith

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Quantitative research and data analysis

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Extreme Weather

Dr Edward Graham

Qualitative Inquiry

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Understanding the Policy Environment

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Working with Communities

Dr Eilidh Macphail

Research Dissertation

Dr Eilidh Macphail



Programme Content and Structure

The programme has been designed with a progression built around a series of Core and Optional modules. The modular structure enables each student to progress at a pace that suits her/his own situation and specific needs and interests.

Important information: Module choices

The core modules have been designed to provide a foundation in sustainable development in mountain areas. Any student who successfully completes three core modules is eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate.

Following completion of the core modules, the programme is intended to be flexible, allowing students to construct their own programmes of study. They have a choice of options that provide them with opportunities to develop more in-depth knowledge and skills in specific areas. Any student who successfully completes three core modules and three options is eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma or to continue to a dissertation.

The final progression in each programme is to undertake a research dissertation on a topic that is of interest to the student and has been agreed with the appointed UHI internal supervisor. On successful completion and defence of the dissertation, the student will be eligible for the award of an MSc.

The MSc in Sustainable Mountain Development has three core modules – Global Mountain Geographies, Understanding the Policy Environment and Understanding Sustainability

Course Structure

Module title	Module Code	Semester	No of credits	Core/Option
Global Mountain Geographies	UF811101	1	20	Core
Understanding the Policy Environment	UL411983	1	20	Core
Understanding Sustainability Discourses	UF811102	2	20	Core
Sustainable Land Use	UF811104	1	20	Option
Water Resources in a Changing Climate	UF711984	1	20	Option
Communities, Nature & Sustainability	UF811100	1	20	Option
Quantitative research and data analysis (QRDA)*	UX311001	1	20	Option
Extreme Weather	UF811984	2	20	Option
Qualitative inquiry (QI)*	UX211935	2	20	Option
Working with Communities	UL411984	2	20	Option
Biodiversity Management	UC111959	2	20	Option
The Economics of Community Wealth Building	UL111100	2	20	Option
Sustainable Deer Management	UD411980	2	20	Option
Agroecology: Regenerative Food Systems	UF811206	2	20	Option
Research Dissertation	UF811103	SC	60	Core for MSc

[UHI Academic Calendar](#)

- Semester 1: Monday 07 September 2026 - Friday 22 January 2027
- Semester 2: Monday 25 January 2027 - Friday 28 May 2027

Brief Description of Modules

If you have further questions please contact the Module Leaders above.

Global Mountain Geographies (core, semester one)**UF811101**

This module is a foundation for all aspects of the MSc, designed to ensure broad understanding of the various elements of the environmental and societal systems of mountain areas, at the global scale. The integrated understanding of these elements and their interactions is an essential basis for all aspects of sustainable mountain development, which relates to not only mountain areas, but also regions downstream.

This module enables students to develop their knowledge and understanding of montane environmental and societal systems.

Understanding the Policy Environment (core, semester one)**UL411983**

Public policy plays a crucial role in shaping society and addressing complex social issues, so an understanding of the policy process and policy environment is essential for anyone with an interest in sustainability. This module seeks to explore what policy is, how it is made and analysed, and the complex policy environment around this.

Understanding Sustainability Discourses (core, semester two)**UF811102**

Overseeing the implementation of the sustainable development goals is an established part of governance today with implications for action across most working sectors. This module will develop students' critical capacities and skills for differentiating between the range of interpretations within 'sustainability discourse' today. They will explore the contradictions between sustainable development and economic growth policies, and the impact of this on deepening global inequalities.

This will equip students to better understand the difference between 'greenwashing' approaches and genuine action for sustainable development

Sustainable Land Use (optional, semester one)**UF811104**

This module is designed to contribute to students' knowledge, awareness and understanding of the policy context and science behind sustainable land management and renewable energy in an uplands context. It is designed to increase the knowledge, employability and wider awareness of all those involved directly or indirectly with sustainable management of mountain and rural regions

Water Resources in a Changing Climate (optional, semester one)**UF711984**

This module is delivered by a tutor with over 18 years combined experience in water resources regulation, flood management and climate change impact assessment. The course explores the way our water use has been managed up to now and looks at how, under a changing climate, adaptation strategies are being developed to cope with an increasingly variable resource.

The course is aimed at students currently or hoping to be employed in water-related industries such as public water supply, hydropower, beverages (including brewing and distilleries) and agriculture. It is particularly suitable for environmental managers, water resource practitioners, hydrologists and environmental scientists. It also provides relevant CPD for government agency staff such as the environment and conservation agencies where their remit includes the water environment.

It can help those with an interest in water management understand the background against which the regulation of the water environment has been set and explores the way all stakeholders have a role to play in securing the benefits we get from a healthy water environment both now and in the future as we adapt to climate change.

Communities, Nature & Sustainability (optional, semester one)**UF811100**

This module explores the importance of rural areas by investigating the inter-relationship between humans and the natural environment. The way we think about the natural environment influences the way in which we manage the natural environment, and in turn the strength of our links to the natural environment influences the ways in which we think about it. This module emphasises the inter-relatedness of the physical, social, and cultural links with the natural environment and the implications of this for what we mean by the term “rural development”.

Quantitative Research and Data Analysis (QRDA) (optional, semester one)*
UX311001

The module will provide students with the opportunity to explore a variety of quantitative and statistical techniques for the successful design, implementation, and methodology of research studies. It includes data collection, descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing and correlation analysis as well as other techniques

Extreme Weather (optional semester two)
UF811984

Extreme weather events are increasing in both intensity and frequency across the globe, many of an unprecedented severity. For example, in 2021, a heatwave of an unprecedented magnitude (with air temperatures up to 49.6°C) affected the Pacific Northwest of North America – far more extreme than climate scientists had expected, even in the worst-case scenarios. Similar hydro-meteorological storm events of unprecedented extremity have occurred during the northern hemisphere summers of 2022 and 2023. In 2022, 40°C was reached for the first time in the UK – this will become a regular occurrence by the latter decades of the current century. High resolution met modelling also indicates that extreme rainfall events, such as those causing flash floods in summer and autumn, will become four times more likely than they were in the past.

Advances in recent scientific understanding over the past decade confirm that these such extreme events are attributable to global warming and would be statistically

“impossible” without anthropogenic climate change. All climate emission scenarios indicate that they will increase in severity over the coming decades and will continue doing so until the global community properly addresses the climate crisis. Massive adaptation and mitigation issues will undoubtedly plague local, national and international levels of government, and the situation will get a lot worse until it gets better, if at all.

An increased public awareness of weather and climate hazards (e.g. warning systems) together with a greater understanding of the impacts of new, unprecedented, individual extreme events to human-induced climate change is therefore necessary for graduates of the future. The rapidly increasing costs arising due to disasters, will promote an enhanced requirement for extreme climate and hazard experts and responders in both public and private arenas.

Qualitative Inquiry (QI) (optional, semester two)***UX211935**

This module is intended to provide students with the skills necessary to engage in a practical research project of a high standard. It will include an examination of the role of ethics in qualitative research. In addition to a grounding in qualitative research techniques, students will be introduced to quantitative methods including the design and use of questionnaires.

Working with Communities (optional, semester two)**UL411984**

Working with communities is these days a vital part of many job roles and voluntary positions, which brings with it many considerations, especially in rural communities. This module will get students to consider key ideas from community development literature, with a view to understanding and developing the practical skills required to work with communities, from organising events, meetings and research, to communication, project management and leadership.

Students will put this knowledge and skills into practice by reflecting on how these could apply to their own local community/workplace

Biodiversity Management (optional, semester two)**UC11959**

The module explores the methods by which biodiversity management can be achieved, considering strategy and policy at international, regional and local level and implementation. It examines the theories and scientific principles which underpin implementation. The module also critically considers the importance and effectiveness of biodiversity management in the context of sustainable development. The aim of the module is to provide students with the opportunity and tools to understand the scientific principles underpinning biodiversity management and critically assess how effectively biodiversity management operates, particularly in the context of sustainable development.

The Economics of Community Wealth Building (optional, semester two)**UL1111100**

There are two parts to this module. It begins by examining contemporary and historical theories related to local and regional economic regeneration. The module analyses whether such conventional economic approaches are 'fit for purpose' in a global context of transgressing planetary boundaries and the implications for sustainable place-based local economies seeking enhanced wellbeing.

The second part of this module is about re-thinking conventional economics and challenging students to appraise heterodox economic approaches and thinking for sustainability. Students will evaluate emerging ideas (broadly in area of post-growth) and approaches to modify economic policy to achieve a wellbeing economy focusing on tailored local regeneration goals for future net zero sustainable communities

Sustainable Deer Management (optional, semester two)

UD411980

This module will explore the role and position of deer in the Scottish Highlands from sustainable rural development and integrated land management perspectives. Deer are a keystone species in shaping the ecology of mountain environments. They are also a national resource. 'Sustainable deer management' is essential to optimise the multiple public and private benefits associated with deer, whilst minimising negative impacts. Sustainable deer management means managing wild deer by taking account of the full range of environmental, social and economic factors. This module will explore the montane ecosystem context for deer management planning and deer ecology and behaviour. The module will also explore deer population modelling and cull target setting as well as maximising the economic benefits of deer through paid stalking, eco-tourism and venison marketing. Collaborative management of deer, through deer management groups and wider social impacts and benefits of deer management will also be explored

Agroecology: Regenerative Food Systems (optional, semester two)

New code

The module aims to explore the policy and theoretical context of how agriculture development adheres to the principles of sustainable development. Students will be encouraged to collaborate in groups and consider different perceptions of the policy and practice trends in relation to land management for agriculture. It will be expected that students gain an understanding of how sustainable development priorities engage with established and emerging agriculture systems to the benefit of dependent communities.

Research Dissertation (semester one/two – runs over two semesters)

UF811103

This module aims to provide students with an opportunity to undertake a sustained, rigorous and independent piece of research in relation to their MSc programme.

The dissertation must consist of original work and will usually involve the collection of new data. It should be informed by the theoretical and practical knowledge and expertise which the participant has developed throughout their previous MSc modules and other experience, focusing on a theme, topic or problem which is relevant to the personal research interests of the participant and their programme of study. The resulting dissertation should not only present and interpret the research findings but also critically evaluate the research design and methodology employed and identify the outcomes of the research in terms of actual or planned developments and changes

**If you are planning to continue to dissertation level, we strongly recommend you take QRDA or QI as one of your 3 optional modules*

Teaching and Learning

(Please note many of the following links are internal and take you to pages contacted on the UHI intranet so may not work unless you are already an enrolled student)

Introductions to appropriate theoretical and research-based literature are an important feature of the course. The main role of module tutors is to facilitate learning and to encourage participants to test their own ideas, experiences, and assumptions against current practice and thinking. Participants are encouraged to experiment, critically evaluate and, if appropriate, implement new approaches to research and apply the application of this knowledge to their own professional practice. This implies a close partnership between tutors and participants, where new ideas can be developed and where different solutions can be applied to old problems.

Students are challenged to construct knowledge together through regular interactive activities facilitated by module teaching staff, participate in active learning and construct knowledge with the aid of perspectives of peers in an evolving community of practice, learning together in a dynamic and flexible online learning environment.

We aim to create a learning environment for participants where they are encouraged to:

reflect systematically on their own practice and learn from the experience and practice of peers;

critically analyse and challenge the assumptions underlying their professional practice;

relate their ideas to the context of a wider systematic body of literature and knowledge

recognise the value of a range of disciplinary approaches and understand their relative strengths and limitations

To ensure this happens participants are expected to:

critically evaluate relevant concepts and theoretical frameworks

critically review relevant policy documents and academic literature;

engage in a reflective dialogue with teaching staff and other participants through tutorials, discussions and contributions to online conferences and course forums.

This postgraduate degree programme through a combination of now established online distance education learning and teaching strategies developed over two decades of practice and delivery. UHI is a leader in the UK in online distance education.

Learning Resources

Brightspace

Throughout your studies, you will use the virtual learning environment (VLE) [Brightspace](#) both to access learning resources and so connect with fellow students. There is a separate area per module. To prepare for using Brightspace you can use our [Quick start guide to Brightspace](#).

Essential skills

The [Essential Student Skills](#) online resource contains information regarding core skills, using our learning technologies, effective learning, preparing for work, and much, much more. Please spend some time going through the resources and dip in as and when you need a refresher.

UHI Libraries

The [UHI Libraries](#) page on the university website provides useful guides to areas such as copyright, referencing and dissertation skills. You will also be able to access reading lists, electronic resources, e-books and the e-journal gateway. In addition, you can find out how to borrow books from your local, or any other partner, libraries.

Module resource list

Each degree level module at the university has a resource list which provides easy access to core and recommended reading.

[University of the Highlands and Islands | University of the Highlands and Islands \(talis.com\)](http://University of the Highlands and Islands | University of the Highlands and Islands (talis.com))

Email

You will be issued with an e-mail account when you enrol on this programme and you should use this account for all correspondence relating to this programme. Your username will be your student ID. You will use the same login for Brightspace.

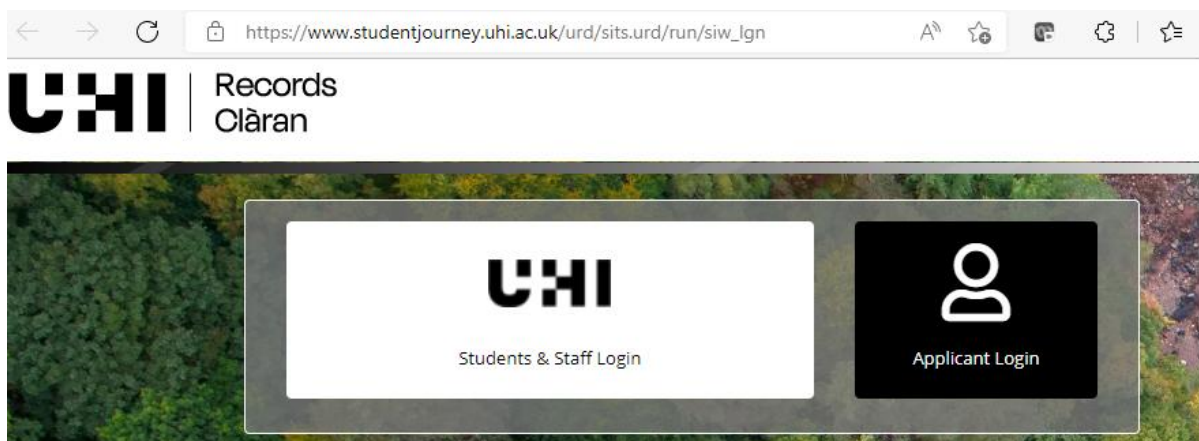
Using the IT systems

Visit [IT and Digital Infrastructure](#) (ITDI) for information and news on services, and how to get help with IT problems.

Further information: [Essential student skills: UHI technologies](#)

Student Hub

The Student Hub, accessed at www.studentjourney.uhi.ac.uk, is where you will find information on enrolments, assessment results and funding information.



The Student Hub homepage

Assessment

Link to assessment schedule: [Assessment type and schedule - U91L7 MSc Sustainable Mountain Development.xlsx](#)

The prospect of assessment can feel rather daunting, particularly if you have not undertaken any academic study for a long time. There will be lots of support available to you including:

- Your tutors, student advisor and course leader
- Study skills support sessions
- Individual Learning Support on a short term or on-going basis
- [Essential student skills](#) resources:

Each tutor will explain what you need to do for each of the units you are studying. You should make sure that you understand what it is they are looking for before you begin the assessment. If you are uncertain, it is important that you ask for clarification. Persist until you are clear.

Academic Standards and Quality Regulations (ASQR)

The Academic Standards and Quality Regulations have been developed to fulfil the regulatory requirements of the University of the Highlands and Islands and are consistent with the



[Pixabay / CC0 1.0](#)

Memorandum and Articles of the university.

This page contains the most pertinent information, but full details of all of the university's standards and regulations can be found at the link below:

[UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations \(ASQR\)](#)

Attendance

You are expected to participate in all programme and module activities (engage with weekly resources, take part in discussions, and submit assignments). If you are unable to do so for any reason, you should contact your PAT or Module Leader. If a situation arises where you may be absent for a longer period, you should inform your Personal Academic Tutor, Student Support and your Programme leader.

Plagiarism and academic misconduct

If, in any work you submit, you put over the ideas and views of others as your own, this may lead to the serious charge of plagiarism. It is acknowledged that some students may do this inadvertently in their coursework, not fully appreciating the rules and standards required in academic work. UHI, like all universities and colleges, has strict rules on plagiarism – when you have used the work of others in your assignment, you must acknowledge this. Similarly, if it comes to light that you are copying and using the ideas of a fellow or past student in your work this will be regarded as

plagiarism/cheating. As a Higher Education student, you need to learn how to avoid this.

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use:

- another person's idea, opinion or theory
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings (in fact, any pieces of information) that are not common knowledge
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words
- paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words.

Strategies for avoiding plagiarism:

- Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text, especially when taking notes.
- Paraphrase but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words.
- Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.
- Always acknowledge facts, diagrams and original thought through referencing.

Assessment appeals

You have the right to appeal against an assessment decision made by an Exam Board, but only on certain grounds.

Full details of the appeals procedure can be found in the UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations which can be accessed via the link at the top of this page).

Late submission

You should ensure that any assessment deadlines are adhered to. The following late submission penalties will be applied to any work handed in beyond the deadline.

Students who do not submit assessments by the prescribed date will be penalised by a deduction of marks.

Up to 1 day late*	5% of final mark will be deducted, e.g. 65 - 3 = 62
2-5 days late	10% of final mark will be deducted, e.g. 65 - 6.5 = 58.5 (59 rounded)
6-10 days late	20% of final mark will be deducted, e.g. 65 - 13 = 52
More than 10 days late	work will not be accepted and will be marked as 0

* i.e. up to 24 hours after the submission time/date, if a time was specified, or by 23.59 hours on the day following the submission date if no time was specified.

Penalties for late submission apply equally to full-time and part-time students. 'Days' refers to actual days, not working days.

Full details can be found in the UHI Academic Standards and Quality Regulations which can be accessed via the link at the top of this page).

Mitigating circumstances

Unexpected circumstances, which are beyond your control, may arise which disrupt your studies and prevent you from performing to your best ability. The system of mitigating circumstances allows you to submit a case that your work has been impacted by these circumstances.

Mitigating circumstances will normally fall into the categories listed below:

- Illness or serious accident at the time of an assessment or in the period leading up to formal assessment
- Serious illness or death of a family member
- Severe unforeseen personal or psychological problems
- Unanticipated difficulties in child or adult care arrangements during a semester [where the student is the named carer for an adult].

The following examples WILL NOT be considered valid:

- Any ongoing situation known to the student
- Inadequate time management
- Moving house or holidays
- Misreading the assessment or exam timetable
- Computer / IT problems of the student's own equipment
- Normal work commitments on behalf of an employer.

More information can be found in the University's Academic Standards and Quality Regulations which can be accessed via the link at the top of this page. If you feel you are experiencing a situation where you are unable to perform at your best, you should discuss this with your Personal Academic Tutor or Student Registry Officer.

The mitigating circumstances claim process is available via the [UHI Records student hub](#) and you should submit any claim as soon as possible.

Resit course work

Resit course work for S1 modules will be submitted **in early March** during semester 2. Resit course work for S2 modules will be submitted in **early August** each year. Non-submission will result in failing the module or by arrangement with your module leader.

UHI Principles on the use of Generative AI tools

We believe that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) has the potential to enhance the user experience for students and staff, create new opportunities for learning and research, and improve the overall efficiency of our operations.

We recognise, however, the need for caution and control to ensure safe and ethical implementation. GAI is subject to bias and discrimination, and there are serious concerns about the potential for unauthorised access to sensitive data. As such, it is essential that we implement AI in a responsible and ethical manner, guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, and privacy. To ensure that the use of GAI

at UHI is performed safely, securely, and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, our approach is centred around the following principles, which have been informed by the Russell Group Principles

The principles must be applied in conjunction with UHI's Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) policy, staff and student guidance.

[Generative Artificial Intelligence \(GAI\) policy \(PDF\)](#)

[Generative Artificial Intelligence guidance for students](#) – please ensure that you read this document, which provides a comprehensive guide to AI at UHI.

May GAI be used for course and assessed work?

Your tutor/lecturer will tell you if and how GAI may be used in your unit/module. All use of GAI must be acknowledged, and full details of how to do this are in the GAI policy. 'Cite Them Right' has a good article on use of artificial intelligence (AI) sources in academic work. Remember not to use direct quotations excessively.

Essential Student Skills will help you write in an academic voice and structure essays and reports. Please note that failure to cite and reference GAI content will be treated as a form of academic misconduct. If GAI use is permitted, you must comply with UHI's Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) policy. If you are in any doubt if you may use GAI, and to what extent, please ask your tutor/lecturer first. If you are employed and your tutor/lecturer permits you to use GAI for your studies, you may not use anything (text, image, code etc.,) related to your place of employment or owned by your employer as a GAI prompt, unless you have the written consent of your employer.

UHI AI Principles

1. We recognise the potential of GAI to enhance everyday work, learning, teaching, and research, and to prepare our students and staff for a GAI-enabled world. We will take a proactive approach to implementing GAI across the university, identifying potential use cases where GAI can improve the user experience for students and staff, enhance our research capabilities, and streamline our operations.

2. We support our students and staff to become GAI-literate, and to use GAI tools effectively and appropriately in their learning and research activities. Users will be informed about the limitations or risks associated with GAI.

3. We adapt our teaching and assessment to incorporate the ethical use of GAI, and to ensure equal access and academic integrity. GAI systems should not be used to generate harmful content such as malicious computer code or to discriminate against, marginalise, or harm any member of UHI's community or society at large.

4. We will seek to make use of GAI tools in ways that are cognisant of and respectful towards the climate, sustainability, and sustainable practices.

5. AI systems should comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

6. We acknowledge and reference the use of generative GAI tools in our work and respect the intellectual property and privacy rights of others. [1 rg_ai_principles-final.pdf](#) (russellgroup.ac.uk). A Scottish working group which has UHI representation will develop principles for the region that will be adopted when published.

7. AI systems should be subject to human oversight and control. This means that there should be mechanisms for human intervention in case of errors or adverse impacts, and that the system should not be fully autonomous or beyond human understanding.

8. Novelty research using GAI should be approached with caution and care to ensure the principles of ethical and moral guidelines are upheld.

9. We will continually evaluate and assess our GAI implementations, and mitigate any risks associated with their use, using feedback from stakeholders to refine and improve our approach over time.

10. We share our best practice and experience of using GAI tools and contribute to the development and evaluation of GAI in education. Reference Russell Group (2023) Russell Group principles on the use of generative AI tools in education. Available at: https://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/6137/rg_ai_principles-final.pdf (Accessed 15 Feb 2024).

Table 1: version history

Version	Date	Prepared by	Description
1.0	06/03/2024	Andy Brown Michelle Smith John Smith Keith Smyth	Based on adaptation of Russell Group principles and UHI draft principles for GAI originally scoped by Andy Brown, John Smith

Student Life and Support

Studying for a degree, sharing accommodation, getting assessments in on time, managing your finances, sitting exams - this section provides information about support available to you as a student of the university.

No issue is too minor to speak to student support about - and doing so early can help to avoid small issues becoming major issues.



Jan Vašek from [Pixabay](#)

[Student information on the UHI website](#)

Being a student at UHI is not just about your studies. There are lots of opportunities to get involved in student activities and representation.

[Support during your studies](#)

[Essential Student Skills: Mental health support at UHI](#)

Personal Academic Tutors

Each UHI student is assigned a named Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) whose responsibility it is to provide you with academic support throughout the duration of your studies.

The PAT for the MSc Sustainable Mountain Development is Rosalind Bryce (who is also the Programme Leader): Rosalind.bryce.perth@uhi.ac.uk

Student Partnership Agreement

The Student Partnership Agreement sets out how students and staff can work together to improve the student experience. Information on the Student Partnership Agreement can be found on [the university's website](#)

Get Involved!

There are lots of ways to get involved and to make the most of your student experience. This page will give you a few ideas but check out the Get Involved page on the UHI website for more information.

[Get involved!](#)

Highlands & Islands Students' Association Highlands and Islands Students'

Association (HISA) represents all students throughout UHI. Details of what they do and how you can get involved can be found at www.hisa.uhi.ac.uk (there's also a [welcome video](#)).



HISA logo

Be a Student Representative

Student representation is an important way to ensure that students' views are heard and taken into account in relation to the quality of learning and teaching at UHI and the overall student experience. Serving on university committees, and as a class representative, are great opportunities to develop skills that will be useful in your future career.

[Student representation at UHI.](#)

Student evaluation

A key element of quality assurance is student evaluation. Your opinions and comments help us to improve the quality of our teaching and deliver a better learning environment for all, so please make sure you fill in your module evaluation sheets and utilise the Student Representation process to good effect.

Red Button

Use the Red Button to let us know how we can improve our service, or to tell us what you like about the university!

[Red Button](#)

Surveys

The university takes student views seriously and uses your feedback to inform decision making processes and enhance the student experience. There are a number of surveys that take place over the academic year. Most are open to all students, but some are only available to specific student groups (e.g. final year degree students, postgraduate students), see the link for further information.

[UHI Surveys](#)

Career Planning

Please make use of the Careers and Employability Service at UHI to help you make decisions about your current and future employment opportunities. We offer CV, application form and covering letter feedback, mock interviews, job search help, and the delivery of events and workshops.

Over the course of your life, you will make frequent career decisions and to successfully do that, you will first need to understand your skills and motivations, what makes you happy, and how you can source potential opportunities. How far your qualification takes you is all about the actions you take, the things you do and also the unknown and unplanned events you will encounter. You will also need to know where to go for help - you'll need to be '*in the know*'.

At the Careers and Employability Centre we do not see career decisions as '*problems to be solved*', but as amazing opportunities for you to look creatively at possibilities; to help you realise your potential and to support you with your next steps.

[UHI Careers and Employability Centre](#)

[UHI Graduate Attributes](#)

Funding

The University of the Highlands and islands offers a number of funding opportunities for your personal development. Take some time to familiarise yourself with these awards, as they offer the possibility of some unique experiences which will help you with both your studies and your future employability.

[Funding](#)

[Bursaries and scholarships](#)

[Student Development Fund](#)