

|               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Meeting       | Board of Management                 |
| Date and time | Thursday 01 April 2021 at 4.30 p.m. |
| Location      | VC – Microsoft Teams                |

Board Secretary  
25 March 2021

## **AGENDA**

### **Welcome and Apologies**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Presentation by Nicola Quinn, HR Manager on Results of the Staff Survey**

### **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

- 1. MINUTES**  
Meeting of the Board of Management – 18 February 2021
- 2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**  
Action List
- 3. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL**
  - Complaints Policy
- 4. SCHEDULE OF BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS – 2021/22**
- 5. OSCR RETURN**
- 6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-22**
- 7. AUDIT COMMITTEE MATTERS FOR BOARD APPROVAL - CONFIDENTIAL**  
Extension to Internal Auditors Contract

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 8. SHARED FINANCE SERVICE**  
Report by Director of Finance
- 9. COVID-19 AND PLANNING FOR 21/22 REPORT**
  - Report by Principal
  - Additional Facility for Construction Delivery – Lease Approval

- 10. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**  
Report by Principal
- 11. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND STATEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW**
- 12. PARTNERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL UPDATE**  
Report by Principal
- 13. DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF BOARD COMMITTEES - (CONFIDENTIAL)**
  - a) Minutes of HR Committee held on 12 November 2020
  - b) Minutes of LT&R Committee held on 17 November 2020
  - c) Minutes of Joint Audit & F&GP Committee held on 27 January 2021
  - d) Minutes of F&GP Committee held on 27 January 2021
  - e) Minutes of Estates Legacy Committee held on 04 February 2021
  - f) Minutes of Chairs Committee held on 04 March 2021
  - g) Minutes of Audit Committee held on 09 March 2021
- FOR NOTING**
- 14. UHI COURT – QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM UHI SMT & ACADEMIC PARTNERS**
  - a) 01 September 2020 – 30 November 2020
  - b) 01 December 2020 – 28 February 2021
- 15. NOTES FROM REGIONAL STRATEGIC COMMITTEE MEETING**
  - a) Minutes of Meeting held on 01 September 2020
  - b) Minutes of Meeting held on 05 November 2020
- 16. HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING MINUTES – 20 January 2021**
- 17. AOCB**
- 18. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**  
29 June 2021 at 4.30 p.m.

If any member wishes to add an item of business to the Agenda, please inform the Chair and the Board Secretary as soon as possible. Additional items of business will only be considered for inclusion in the agenda in advance of the start of the meeting.

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the BOARD OF MANAGEMENT held via Microsoft Teams, on Thursday 18 February 2021**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>PRESENT:</b>       | Sarah Burton, Robyn Kennedy, Innis Montgomery, Chris O'Neil, Kelly Mackenzie, Ruth McFadyen, Gillian Galloway, Samantha Cribb, Andy Gray, Sally Blyth, Donald MacKenzie, Leanne MacKenzie, Tina Stones. Arvinder Kainth, Mark Sheridan, Vivienne Mackie, Russell Edwards, Amy Goodbrand        |
| <b>CHAIR:</b>         | Sarah Burton   |
| <b>APOLOGIES:</b>     | None   |
| <b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> | Depute Principal Planning and Student Experience<br>Depute Principal Academic Development<br>Director of Finance<br>Director of External Relations<br>Director of Student Experience<br>Director of Curriculum<br>Board Secretary<br>Amanda MacKenzie, Head of Procurement, UHI Shared Service |

The Chair of the Board of Management welcomed the new members to the meeting as well as Amanda MacKenzie, Head of Procurement, UHI Shared Service.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were noted.

**1. MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON 01 DECEMBER 2020**

**Decision:** The minutes of the Board of Management Meeting held on 01 December 2020 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

**2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

- Committee Representation – The Board of Management noted that the Chair and the Board Secretary would meet with student representatives to discuss committee representation. The Board of Management noted that this item is linked to the External Effectiveness Review action/development plan.
- OSCR – The Board of Management noted that the OSCR return for 19/20 is due to be drafted by the Board Secretary in March and will be brought to the April Board of Management Meeting for approval.

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- Staff Disciplinary Policy – The Board of Management was advised that the Director of Finance would review the policy with regards to fraud and corruption. The policy will then be scrutinised at the F&GP Committee in due course.
- FRP – The Board of Management was advised that as part of our External Effectiveness action/development plan we would review how all reports are presented to Committees.
- Staff Survey – The Principal advised that the Health and Safety Wellbeing Sub Group is continuing to analyse the results of the staff survey. A copy of the initial report has now been presented to SMT and will be brought to the April 2021 Board of Management meeting.

### 3. PROCUREMENT REPORT

Amanda MacKenzie took the Board of Management through the procurement report for 2019-20 advising that this report has been discussed at the F&GP Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The Board of Management gave their thanks for such a comprehensive report and noted the improvement within procurement over the last five years.

*Amanda MacKenzie left the meeting at this point.*

### 4. GOVERNANCE APPOINTMENTS

#### a.) Appointment of New Board of Management Members

The Board Secretary reported on the October/November 2020 recruitment process and advised that following interviews four applicants were offered the position of Non-Executive Members of the Board of Management. UHI approval of these appointments was received on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the appointment of Arvinder Kainth, Mark Sheridan, Russell Edwards and Tina Stones as Non-Executive Members of the Board of Management.

#### b.) Appointment of a Co-opted Member to the Audit Committee

The Board Secretary advised the Board of Management that as part of the recruitment process described above; the interview panel offered the position of Co-opted Member to the Audit Committee to one applicant.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the appointment of Amy Goodbrand as a Co-opted Member of the Audit Committee.

#### c.) Senior Independent Member Appointment

The Board Secretary advised the Board of Management on the role of Senior Independent Member and how this role provides advice and guidance to

both the Board Chair and Board Members. The Board of Management was advised that as the longest serving member on the Board of Management Innis Montgomery has been offered and accepted this position

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the appointment of Innis Montgomery to the role of Senior Independent Member.

### **d.) Vice Chair Nominations**

The Board Secretary advised the Board of Management on the process for nominating a Vice-Chair noting that all Board of Management members were advised on 17 December 2020 that the Vice Chair would be standing down on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and that a call for nominations was being made. One nomination was received.

The nominated candidate Tina Stones was given the opportunity to address the Board of Management.

*Tina Stones then left the meeting.*

Members of the Board of Management were asked to support the nomination via a secret ballot on JISC Surveys.

*The Board Secretary and Sally Blyth, Scrutineer of the ballot left the meeting to count the ballots.*

*Tina Stones, Sally Blyth and the Board Secretary returned to the meeting*

The Board Secretary advised that the results of the ballot were 15 votes supporting the nomination of Tina Stones, 0 votes against and 0 abstentions.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the appointment of Tina Stones to the role of Vice-Chair of the Board of Management.

### **e.) Appointment of Audit and LT&R Chairs**

The Board Secretary advised that due to the departure of the interim Audit Chair in January 2021 and the LT&R Chair in August 2020 that there is a need to fill these roles. The Board Secretary advised that the Chair of the Board of Management had discussed these roles with various Board Members and following these discussions the roles had been offered to Tina Stones and Gillian Galloway.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the appointment of Tina Stones as the Chair of the LT&R Committee and the appointment of Gillian Galloway as the Chair of the Audit Committee.

## **5. AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR END 31 JULY 2020**

### **a.) Draft Minutes of the Joint Audit & Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27 January 2021**

The Board of Management noted the contents of the minutes of the Joint Audit and Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27 January 2021.

### **b.) Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 July 2020**

The Director of Finance advised that the Annual Reports and Accounts for the Year ended 31 July 2020 had been approved on 27 January 2021 by the Joint Audit and Finance and General Purposes Committee who had recommended that the Board of Management give their approval.

The Director of Finance advised that he had provided a narrative to accompany these accounts and noted that whilst there had been some slight amendments made since the meeting on 27 January 2021 the balance sheet had not changed.

The Director of Finance confirmed that we were an Incorporated College and gave a background and explanation as to what this means in terms of our accounts.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **RATIFIED** the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 July 2020.

### **c.) Draft Inverness College Annual Audit Report by Ernst & Young**

The Board of Management was advised that this report had been scrutinised by the Joint Audit and F&GP Committee who were content to recommend that this be approved.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **APPROVED** the Annual Audit Report by Ernst & Young

### **d.) Letter of Representation**

The Director of Finance advised that Letter of Representation would be signed and sent to E&Y following Board of Management approval.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **APPROVED** the signing off the Letter of Representation.

## **6. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The Board Secretary advised that this report had been discussed at the Audit Committee Meeting held on 10 November 2020 and had been duly updated and taken to the Joint Audit & F&GP Committee Meeting on 27 January 2021 where it was recommended that the report be taken to the Board of Management for approval.

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The Board of Management noted that this is a standard report which highlights the membership of the Audit Committee, attendance at meetings and the key reports presented during 2019-20.

A discussion around the Health and Safety internal audit took place with the Board of Management noting that the Health and Safety Manager is working on how we address and respond to recommendations from audits.

**Decision:** The Board of Management **APPROVED** the Audit Committee Annual Report.

### 7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal spoke to his confidential report highlighting the following to the Board of Management:

- FRP – the impact of the FRP can be seen within our audited accounts. All remaining parts of the FRP will be concluded in the next few months.
- ELCC – outlining the health and safety measures in place at the current time to ensure the ELCC maintains operations as required. The ELCC are now increasing their maximum number of children to 16 with a maximum of 6 members of staff increasing the total occupancy to 22.

The Board sought clarification for the future operation of the ELCC service as regards lease arrangements and staffing.

- Request for Delegated Authority – The Principal advised that there was a request for delegated authority for the Chair of the Board of Management and himself to sign a short term lease on a commercial building in response to the impact of covid-19.

The Principal advised that the building is required in order to assist with the process of bringing students back into face-to-face teaching. The Scottish Government has given an estimate of 5% occupancy ahead of the Easter break and we now have to look at defining what face-to-face teaching is considered essential.

A lengthy discussion took place with regards:

- Ensuring that there is appropriate toilet facilities available for both staff and students to ensure that the appropriate distancing is adhered to.
- Support from unions and the flexibility that staff have with regards to working out with their terms and conditions.
- The role of UHI with regards decision making.

*Tina Stones left the meeting at this point.*

The Principal advised that in order to adhere to the 5% occupancy we need to review how we are utilising space in order to ensure that practical work can be taught. Currently our woodwork provision has 14 benches

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however only 12 of these are able to be used by students. It is planned as part of our capital expenditure spend to redesign the rooms in order to improve efficiency however even with these changes there will be a need for additional space. As well as this there is the opportunity to take on new apprentices if we lease the additional building.

The Principal advised that the lease itself would be time limited with the building being sited in Longman Road. The building itself is ideal for construction type programmes and the use of it would allow us to not only progress students through their learning but allow us to expand our business. The lease will be for 5 years but would have a 3 year break clause included. The Principal advised that the cost is expected to be £45K per annum however negotiations have not yet began.

The Board of Management discussed this proposal highlighting:

- Whether staff following the VSS would be in a position to take on additional students, whether there would be any impact on the student experience with the Board of Management being advised that students would continue to have opportunities to move through the institution.
- That we are continuing to convert the central stores and that there may be additional flexibility of office space being used for teaching as staff have an appetite for a blended approach to work in the future.
- The need for a business case for this proposal as there is some concern with regards clarity to ensure that beyond Covid-19 that the space is required.

The principal highlighted the table within his report which shows that we have significant unmet demand for construction which has grown over the last 5 years due to the fact that our work space is occupied. There has been no drop in demand for apprentices.

**Decision:** The Board of Management whilst appreciative of this innovative strategy requested sight of a developed business plan.

### 8. AOCB

The Director of External Relations advised that Board approval is sought to extend our legal services contract with Anderson and Strathern for a further year.

**Decision:** The Board **APPROVED** the extension of our legal services contract with Anderson and Strathern for a further year.

The HISA President advised that a new CEO had been appointed and the Board of Management extended their congratulations to James Lindsay.

### 9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Date of Next Meeting: 01 April 2021 at 4.30 p.m.

**Board of Management – List of Outstanding Actions**

|                           |   |                 |            |  |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|------------|--|
| <b>30 April 2020</b>      |   |                 |            |  |
| <b>OSCR Return</b>        | The OSCR return for 19/20 to be drafted in March 2021                                 | Board Secretary | March 2021 |  |
| <b>01 December 2020</b>   |   |                 |            |  |
| <b>Principal's Report</b> | Results of the staff survey will be available for discussion at the next BOM meeting. |                 |            |  |

## Board of Management Committee

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>  | Complaints Policy (and Procedure for Noting)  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]   | Liz Cook, Quality Manager   |
| <b>Meeting:</b>  | Board of Management Committee   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>   | 1st April 2021  |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>  | 23rd March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>   | <p>The BOM Committee is asked to approve the Complaints Policy. The Complaints Policy was approved at Scrutiny Panel on 8<sup>th</sup> February, SMT Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, and BOM LTR Committee on 16th March 2021.</p> <p>The Complaints Procedure has been included for noting. SMT approved the Complaints Procedure on 1<sup>st</sup> March. This has been included so the Board of Management have sight of the changes introduced as a result of the SPSO review of the Model Complaints Handling Procedure. A Tertiary common procedure has been developed across the partnership, SPSO have confirmed the procedure is compliant with their requirements. An SPSO document detailing the summary of the changes has been included for information.</p> |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]   | Approval – Policy<br>Noting - Procedure   |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compliance</li> <li>• partnership services</li> <li>• risk management</li> <li>• strategic plan</li> <li>• new opportunity/change</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>  | Yes / No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b>  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>  | Yes / No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational:<br>Organisational:   |

|   |                                   |  |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | Yes/No<br>If yes, please specify: |  |  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  |                                   |  |  |
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]   |                                   |  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]  |                                   |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                            |                                   |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)  |                                   | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                       |                                   | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)   |                                   | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |                                   |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)



**Complaints Policy**  
**REFERENCE: PL/QU/2015/001**

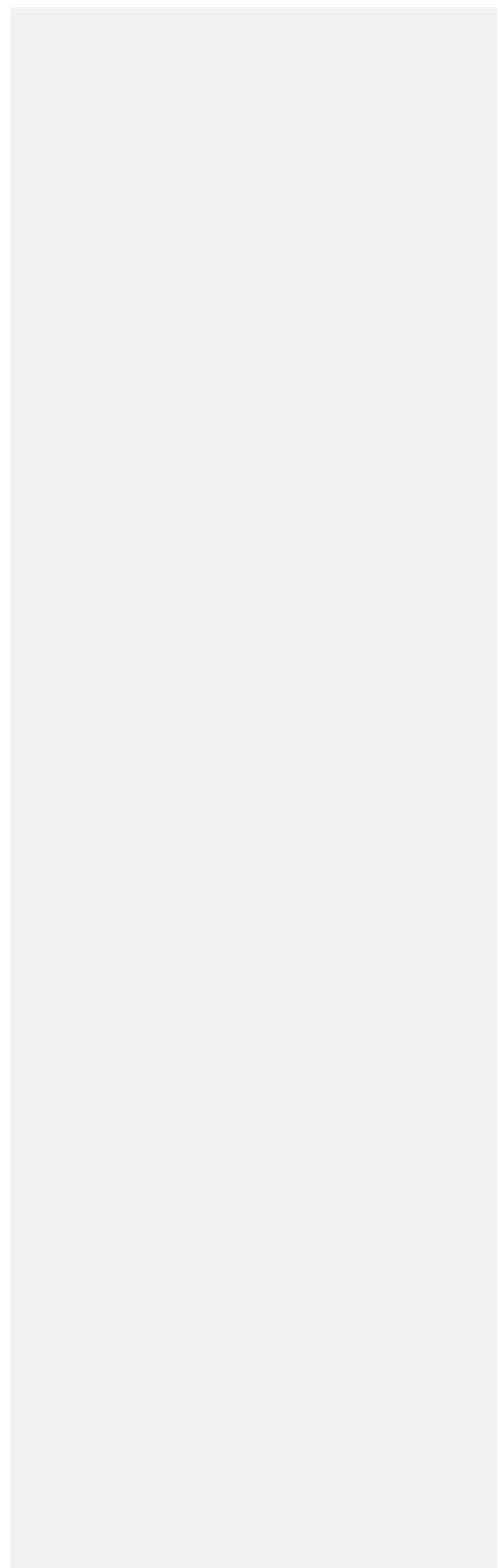
|                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Lead Officer                         | Depute Principal  |
| Review Officer                       | Quality Manager   |
| Date first approved by BoM           | 22 September 2009 |
| First Review Date                    | 12 September 2011 |
| Date review approved by BoM          | 01 December 2015  |
| Next Review Date                     | 30 September 2020 |
| Equality impact assessment           | 21 February 2018  |
| Further information (where relevant) |                   |

| Reviewer        | Date     | Review Action/Impact |
|-----------------|----------|----------------------|
| Quality Manager | 12.09.11 | Reviewed by BoM      |
| Quality Manager | 13.06.13 | Reviewed by BoM      |
| Quality Manager | 01.12.15 | Reviewed by BoM      |
|                 |          |                      |

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## 1. Policy Statement

Inverness College UHI is committed to the provision of providing a high quality and enjoyable learning experience to all learners and high-quality services. On occasion, learners, customers and / or key stakeholders may have cause to make a complaint.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the college's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by the college or on its behalf.

The College views complaints seriously and investigating a complaint provides an opportunity to review and enhance the services we offer. When complaints are received, College staff will follow the complaints **handling** procedure which ensures that all complainants are dealt with:

- Fairly
- Timeously
- With courtesy and respect
- Transparently

The College will ensure that all complaints are:

- Identified as to the nature of the complaint
- Thoroughly investigated
- Brought to a satisfactory resolution

The College will ensure that complainants

- Are kept informed as to each stage of the process
- Can make a complaint without fear of reprisal or victimisation; however where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious the College reserves the right to pursue possible sanctions against the complainant.
- Students may not complain about an academic judgement – the internal academic appeals process, [as outlined in the Academic Regulations](#), should be used for this purpose.
- Are aware of their ~~Have the~~ right to complain to SQA, and other awarding bodies-about assessment-related matters (but not assessment judgements) if they remain dissatisfied once they have exhausted the College's internal complaints procedure.
- Who are ~~c~~Candidates on regulated qualifications, have a further right to complain to SQA Accreditation or Ofqual once they have exhausted the College's internal complaints procedure and the SQA / Awarding body's complaint procedure.
- Are aware of ~~Have~~ the right to escalate their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) about issues other than assessment-related matters.

Anonymous complaints will be investigated if enough information is provided for us to make further enquiries.

The complainant will be informed of who will take the lead in dealing with the complaint. One response will be sent covering all issues raised. In exceptional circumstances, where there are multiple strands to a complaint or where elements of the complaint are time sensitive, the college may respond separately to different aspects.

**Commented [LC1]:** Removed reference to one or two departments, as the complainant is notified who will take the lead in their complaint

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## 2. Legislative framework/related policies

- 2.1. Freedom of Information Policy
- 2.2. Data Protection Policy
  - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (From 25 May 2018)
- 2.3. Public Interest Disclosure (Whistle Blowing) Policy
- 2.4. Academic Standards and Quality Regulations (FE and HE)
- 2.5. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy
- 2.6. FE Guidance Policy
- 2.7. Learner Agreement
- 2.8. Staff Discipline Policy
- 2.9. Staff Code of Conduct
- 2.10. Equality Schemes
- 2.11 SPSO/Government Legislation
- 2.12 Awarding Body Quality Assurance Requirements

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. The policy applies to staff, learners, customers and key stakeholders of Inverness College UHI.

## 4. Compliance

- 4.1. This policy must be complied with and it will be audited regularly with quarterly and annual complaints reports submitted to Senior Management Team (SMT), Academic Management and Quality Committee (AMQC) meetings, and Board Committee meetings.

## 5. Monitoring

- 5.1. Each College policy will be monitored and its implementation evaluated. Appropriate procedures for monitoring and evaluation are the responsibility of the Lead Officer. These procedures will be subject to audit by the Quality Unit.

## 6. Review

- 6.1. This policy will be reviewed in February 2024 and every three years thereafter unless legislation requires this to be completed sooner.



## Model CHPs: Key changes by 1 April 2021

The changes outlined below are applicable to **all sectors except NHS**. These are changes to the core text of the revised Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP), which is consistent across all sectors except NHS.

### Structure and presentation

- Core text standardised across all sectors (with additional sector-specific text and examples in each version)
- Presented in five parts to make relevant information easier to find
- Social work and Local Authority MCHPs combined

### Resolving complaints

- Organisations may **resolve** a complaint by agreeing any action to be taken with the customer, without making a decision on whether to uphold / not uphold
- There must be a clear record of the resolution agreed and signposting to next stage

### Agreeing complaint and outcome sought at stage 2

- Organisations must agree the points of complaint and outcome sought with the complainant at the start of stage 2 (investigation)
- Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are clear, this can be done by setting these out in the complaint acknowledgement letter

### Time limit for making complaints

- The six-month timeframe to make a complaint also now applies where the customer wishes to escalate to Stage 2 because they are unhappy with the Stage 1 response

### Supporting staff

- Organisations must share relevant parts of the complaint and response with any staff members complained about
- At stage 2, staff members must be given information about the complaint process and support available, and kept updated on any timeframe extensions

### Equality and accessibility

- Organisations should set out what kind of actions staff may take to support equal access to the complaints process (including for vulnerable groups)
- Organisations will customise this section to reflect local context

## **Complaints on social media (and other digital platforms)**

- As a minimum, organisations must respond to complaints on the organisation's own social media channels by signposting to the complaint process and support available
- Organisations will customise this section to reflect local policy and approach

## **Contact from MPs/MSPs**

- Organisations can set out details of local procedures but must ensure they comply with relevant legislation
- Where a complaint is brought by an MP/MSP, the organisation must handle it in line with the CHP and ensure they do **not** operate a two-tier system

## **Performance indicators**

- Organisations to report and publish on complaint statistics in line with performance indicators published by the SPSO
- These are currently being developed, and will include core performance indicators applicable to all sectors (similar to those released in the draft MCHP)
- Additional performance indicators to support benchmarking are being developed for some sectors (LA, FE and housing) in consultation with those sectors' complaint handling networks



Inverness College  
University of the Highlands and Islands

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Part 1: Overview and Structure

| Version | Description                                     | Date          |
|---------|---|---------------|
| 0.1     | Drafting based on SPSO MCHP                     | March 2020    |
| 0.5     | Finalise drafting                               | October 2020  |
| 0.6     | Amendments following SPSO compliance assessment | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Approved by Policy Ownership Group              | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Endorsed by Partnership Council                 | TBC           |
| 1.0     | Approved by FGPC; published to website          | TBC           |

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## Part 1: Introduction and overview

### Foreword

Our Complaints Handling Procedure reflects the University of the Highlands and Islands partnership's (University partnership) commitment to valuing complaints. It seeks to resolve dissatisfaction as close as possible to the point of service delivery and to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of the case.

The procedure was first developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), in collaboration with representatives of the Higher Education and Further Education sector.

The Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHPs) were revised in 2019 by the SPSO in consultation with all sectors. This new edition includes a core text, which is consistent across all public services in Scotland, with some additional text and examples specific to this sector.

As far as is possible we have produced a standard approach to handling complaints across Scotland's public services, which complies with the SPSO's guidance on a MCHP. This procedure aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early responses by capable, well-trained staff.

All staff across the University partnership must cover this procedure as part of their induction and must be given refresher training as required, to ensure they are confident in identifying complaints, empowered to resolve simple complaints on the spot, and familiar with how to apply this procedure (including recording complaints).

Complaints give us valuable information we can use to improve service provision and customer satisfaction. Our Complaints Handling Procedure will enable us to address a complainant's dissatisfaction and may help us prevent the same problem from happening again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the complainants' views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our students and other members of the public a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.

Handling complaints early creates better relations with students and other members of the public. Handling complaints close to the point of service delivery means we can deal with them locally and quickly, so they are less likely to escalate to the next stage of the procedure. Complaints that we do not handle swiftly can greatly add to our workload and are more costly to administer.

The Complaints Handling Procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships and enhance public perception of the University of the Highlands and Islands. It will help us keep the user at the heart of the process, while enabling us to better understand how to improve our services by learning from complaints.

Whilst individuals can make a complaint without fear of reprisal or victimisation; where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious the College reserves the right to pursue possible sanctions against the complainant. There is therefore a level of responsibility placed on the complainant.

## Structure of the Complaints Handling Procedure

1. This Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) explains to staff how to handle complaints. The CHP consists of:
  - Overview and structure (part 1) – this document
  - When to use the procedure (part 2) – guidance on identifying what is and what is not a complaint, handling complex or unusual complaint circumstances, the interaction of complaints and other processes, and what to do if the CHP does not apply
  - The complaints handling process (part 3) – guidance on handling a complaint through stages 1 and 2, and dealing with post-closure contact
  - Governance of the procedure (part 4) – staff roles and responsibilities and guidance on recording, reporting, publicising and learning from complaints
  - The guide for students (part 5) – information for students and members of the public on how we handle complaints
2. When using the CHP, please also refer to the ‘SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles’ and good practice guidance on complaints handling from the SPSO.  
[www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

## Overview of the CHP

3. Anyone can make a complaint, either verbally or in writing, including face- to-face, by phone, letter or email.
4. We will try to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant wherever this is possible. Where this isn’t possible, we will give the complainant a clear response to each of their points of complaint. We will always try to respond as quickly as we can (and on the spot where possible).
5. Our complaints procedure has two stages. We expect the majority of complaints will be handled at stage 1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after stage 1, they can request that we look at it again, at stage 2. If the complaint is complex enough to require an investigation, we will put the complaint into stage 2 straight away and skip stage 1.

| Stage 1: Frontline response  | Stage 2: Investigation   | Independent external review (SPSO or other)  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>For issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation</p> <p>‘On-the-spot’ apology, explanation, or other action to put the matter right</p> <p>Complaint resolved or a response provided in <b>five working days</b> or less (unless there are exceptional circumstances)</p> <p>Complaints addressed by any member of staff, or alternatively referred to the appropriate point for frontline response</p> <p>Response normally face-to-face or by telephone (though sometimes we will need to put the decision in writing)</p> <p>We will tell the complainant how to escalate their complaint to stage 2</p> | <p>Where the complainant is not satisfied with the frontline response, or refuses to engage at the frontline, or where the complaint is complex, serious or 'high-risk'</p> <p>Complaint acknowledged within <b>three working days</b></p> <p>We will contact the complainant to clarify the points of complaint and outcome sought (where these are already clear, we will confirm them in the acknowledgement)</p> <p>Complaint resolved or a definitive response provided within <b>20 working days</b> following a thorough investigation of the points raised</p> | <p>Where the complainant is not satisfied with the stage 2 response from the service provider</p> <p>The SPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the service provider</p> <p>Some complaints may also have an alternative route for independent external review</p> |

6. For detailed guidance on the process, see Part 3: The complaints handling process.

### Expected behaviours

7. We expect all staff to behave in a professional manner and treat complainants with courtesy, respect and dignity. We also ask those bringing a complaint to treat our staff with respect. We ask complainants to engage actively with the complaint handling process by:
- telling us their key issues of concern and organising any supporting information they want to give us (we understand that some people will require support to do this)
  - working with us to agree the key points of complaint when an investigation is required; and
  - responding to reasonable requests for information

8. We have guidance in place for when these standards are not met which is the Unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance.
9. We recognise that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. Sometimes a health condition or a disability can affect how a person expresses themselves. The circumstances leading to a complaint may also result in the complainant acting in an unacceptable way.
10. People who have a history of challenging or inappropriate actions, or have difficulty expressing themselves, may still have a legitimate grievance, and we will treat all complaints seriously. However, we also recognise that the actions of some complainants may result in unreasonable demands on time and resources or unacceptable behaviour towards our staff. We will, therefore, apply our policies and procedures to protect staff from unacceptable actions such as unreasonable persistence, threats or offensive behaviour from complainants. Where we decide to restrict access to a complainant under the terms of our policy, we have a procedure in place to communicate that decision, notify the complainant of their right of appeal, and review any decision to restrict contact with us.
11. If we decide to restrict a complainant's contact, we will be careful to follow the process set out in our policy and to minimise any restrictions on the complainant's access to the complaints process. We will normally continue investigating a complaint even where contact restrictions are in place (for example, limiting communication to letter or to a named staff member). In some cases, it may be possible to continue investigating the complaint without contact from the complainant.
12. Our policy allows us in limited circumstances to restrict access to the complaint process entirely. This would be as a last resort, should be as limited as possible (for a limited time, or about a limited set of subjects) and requires manager approval. Where access to the complaint process is restricted, we must signpost the complainant to the SPSO (see Part 3: Signposting to the SPSO).
13. The SPSO has [guidance on promoting positive behaviour and managing unacceptable actions](#).

#### Maintaining confidentiality and data protection

14. Confidentiality is important in complaints handling. This includes maintaining the complainant's confidentiality and confidentiality in relation to information about staff members, contractors or any third parties involved in the complaint.
15. This should not prevent us from being open and transparent, as far as possible, in how we handle complaints. This includes sharing as much information with the complainant (and, where appropriate, any affected staff members) as we can. When sharing information, we should be clear about why the information is being shared and our expectations on how the recipient will use the information.
16. We must always bear in mind legal requirements, for example data protection legislation, as well as internal policies on confidentiality and the use of individuals' information.



Inverness College  
University of the Highlands and Islands

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Part 2: When to use this procedure

| Version | Description                                     | Date          |
|---------|---|---------------|
| 0.1     | Drafting based on SPSO MCHP                     | March 2020    |
| 0.5     | Finalise drafting                               | October 2020  |
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## What is a complaint

1. The University of the Highlands and Islands partnership's definition of a complaint is: 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the University partnership's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the University partnership.
2. For clarity, where an employee also receives a service from the University partnership as a member of the public, they may complain about that service.
3. A complaint may relate to the following, but is not restricted to this list:
  - the admissions process
  - the disciplinary process
  - a request for a service or for information which has not been actioned or answered
  - wrong information about academic programmes or college services
  - the quality and availability of facilities and learning resource
  - accessibility of our buildings or services
  - failure or refusal to provide a service
  - inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
  - the quality of facilities or learning resources
  - dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual (although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the institution)
  - failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
  - failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
  - conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves: see Complaints about contracted services); or
  - disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).
4. A complaint is not:
  - a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
  - a disagreement with academic judgment
  - a concern about student conduct (see Complaints and student conduct procedures)
  - a routine first-time request for a service (see Complaints and service requests)
  - a request for compensation only (see Complaints and compensation claims)
  - an insurance claim
  - issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (see Complaints and legal action)
  - disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector (such as an appeal about an academic decision on assessment or admission – see Complaints and appeals)
  - a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts, or the Environmental Information Regulations
  - a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
  - a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)

- concerns about services outwith the institution's delegated responsibilities (e.g. conference and accommodation services to commercial clients)
  - a concern about a child or an adult's safety
  - an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
  - abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our institution or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance; or
  - a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf: see Complaints about contracted services).
5. We will not treat these issues as complaints, and will instead direct people to use the appropriate procedures. Some situations can involve a combination of issues, where some are complaints and others are not, and each situation should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
6. If a matter is not a complaint, or not suitable to be handled under the CHP, we will explain this to the complainant, and tell them what (if any) action we will take, and why. See What if the CHP does not apply.

### Who can make a complaint?

7. Anyone who receives, requests, or is affected by our services can make a complaint.
8. This includes, although is not limited to:
- a student's experience during their time at the institution (all referred to as 'students' through the remainder of this document);
  - members of the public, where they have a complaint about matters which are (or which were at the time the issue arose) the responsibility of the institution; and members of the public who are applying for admission to the institution and whose complaint does not relate to academic judgement.
9. The basic processes for investigating complaints are the same for students, members of the public and applicants to the institution – however appeals / complaints regarding a decision not to admit an applicant will be dealt with through admissions procedures.
10. We also accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. See Complaints by (or about) a third party.

### Supporting the complainant

11. Everyone has the right to equal access to our complaints procedure. It is important to recognise the barriers that some people may face complaining. These may be physical, sensory, communication or language barriers, but can also include their anxieties and concerns. Complainants may need support to overcome these barriers.
12. We have legal duties to make our complaints service accessible under equalities and mental health legislation.

For example:

- the Equality Act (Scotland) 2010 – this gives people with a protected characteristic the right to reasonable adjustments to access our services (such as large print or BSL translations of information); and
- the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 – this gives anyone with a 'mental disorder' (including mental health issues, learning difficulties, dementia and autism) a right to access independent advocacy. This must be delivered by independent

organisations that only provide advocacy. They help people to know and understand their rights, make informed decisions and have a voice.

13. Examples of how we will meet our legal duties are:
  - proactively checking whether members of the public who contact us require additional support to access our services
  - providing interpretation and/or translation services for British Sign Language users; and
  - helping complainants access independent advocacy (the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance website has information about local advocacy organisations throughout Scotland).
14. In addition to our legal duties, we will seek to ensure that we support vulnerable groups in accessing our complaints procedure. Actions that we may take include:
  - helping vulnerable people identify when they might wish to make a complaint (for example, by training frontline staff who provide services to vulnerable groups)
  - helping complainants access independent support or advocacy to help them understand their rights and communicate their complaints (for example, through the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance or Citizen's Advice Scotland); and
  - providing a neutral point of contact for complaints (where the relationship between complainants and frontline staff is significant and ongoing).
15. These lists are not exhaustive, and we must always take into account our commitment and responsibilities to equality and accessibility.

#### How complaints may be made

16. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing, including face-to-face, by phone, letter or email.
17. Where a complaint is made verbally, we will make a record of the key points of complaint raised.
18. Complaint issues may also be raised on digital platforms (including social media).
19. Where a complaint issue is raised via a digital channel managed and controlled by the University partnership (for example an official Twitter address or facebook page), we will explain that we do not take complaints on social media, but we will tell the person how they can complain.
20. Where a complaint issue is raised via a digital channel managed and controlled by the University partnership (for example an official Twitter address or Facebook page):
  - we will normally respond by explaining that we do not normally take complaints on social media and telling the person how they can complain;
  - in exceptional circumstances, we may respond to very simple complaints on social media. This will normally only be appropriate where an issue is likely to affect a large number of people, and we can provide a very simple response (for example, an apology for the late cancellation of a class).
21. We may also become aware that an issue has been raised via a digital channel not controlled or managed by us (for example a youtube video or post on a private facebook group). In such cases we may respond, where we consider it appropriate, by telling the person how they can complain.
22. We must always be mindful of our data protection obligations when responding to issues online or in a public forum. See Part 1: Maintaining confidentiality and data protection.

### Time limit for making complaints

23. The complainant must raise their complaint within six months of when they first knew of the problem, unless there are special circumstances for considering complaints beyond this time (for example, where a person was not able to complain due to serious illness or recent bereavement).
24. Where a complainant has received a stage 1 response, and wishes to escalate to stage 2, unless there are special circumstances they must request this either:
  - within six months of when they first knew of the problem; or
  - within two months of receiving their stage 1 response (if this is later).
25. We will apply these time limits with discretion, taking into account the seriousness of the issue, the availability of relevant records and staff involved, how long ago the events occurred, and the likelihood that an investigation will lead to a practical benefit for the complainant or useful learning for the institution.
26. We will also take account of the time limit within which a member of the public can ask the SPSO to consider complaints (normally one year). The SPSO have discretion to waive this time limit in special circumstances (and may consider doing so in cases where we have waived our own time limit).

### Particular circumstances

#### Complaints by (or about) a third party

27. Sometimes a complainant may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on their own. We will accept complaints from third parties, which may include relatives, friends, advocates and advisers. Where a complaint is made on behalf of a complainant, we must ensure that the complainant has authorised the person to act on their behalf. It is good practice to ensure the complainant understands their personal information will be shared as part of the complaints handling process (particularly where this includes sensitive personal information). This can include complaints brought by parents on behalf of their child, if the child is considered to have capacity to make decisions for themselves.
28. The provision of a signed mandate from the complainant will normally be sufficient for us to investigate a complaint. If we consider it is appropriate we can take verbal consent direct from the complainant to deal with a third party and would normally follow up in writing to confirm this.
29. In certain circumstances, a person may raise a complaint involving another person's personal data, without receiving consent. The complaint should still be investigated where possible, but the investigation and response may be limited by considerations of confidentiality. The person who submitted the complaint should be made aware of these limitations and the effect this will have on the scope of the response.
30. See also Part 1: Maintaining confidentiality and data protection.

#### Serious, high-risk or high-profile complaints

31. We will take particular care to identify complaints that might be considered serious, high-risk or high-profile, as these may require particular action or raise critical issues that need senior management's direct input. Serious, high-risk or high-profile complaints should normally be handled immediately at stage 2 (see Part 3: Stage 2: Investigation).
32. We define potential high-risk or high-profile complaints as those that may lead to:
  - an allegation of corruption against an employee
  - a claim of dereliction of duty by an employee
  - a claim of personal injury that has incapacitated the customer

- a potentially significant risk to the institution's operations
- a claim of discrimination, with due regard to protected characteristics as set out in section 149(7) of the Equality Act 2010
- an allegation of significant harm or abuse or where there is a suspicion that someone may suffer significant harm
- serious service failure, for example major delays in providing, or repeated failures to provide, a service; or
- significant and ongoing press and public interest
- involve a death or terminal illness
- involve serious service failure, for example major delays in service provision or repeated failures to provide a service
- pose a serious operational risk to the institution; or
- present issues of a highly sensitive nature.

#### Anonymous complaints

33. We value all complaints, including anonymous complaints, and will take action to consider them further wherever this is appropriate. Generally, we will consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable us to make further enquiries. Any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint must be authorised by an appropriate manager.
34. If we pursue an anonymous complaint further, we will record it as an anonymous complaint together with any learning from the complaint and action taken.
35. If an anonymous complainant makes serious allegations, these should be dealt with in a timely manner under relevant procedures. This may not be the complaints procedure and could instead be relevant child protection, adult protection or disciplinary procedures.

#### What if the person does not want to complain?

36. If someone has expressed dissatisfaction in line with our definition of a complaint but does not want to complain, we will explain that complaints offer us the opportunity to improve services where things have gone wrong. We will encourage them to submit their complaint and allow us to handle it through the CHP. This will ensure they are updated on the action taken and get a response to their complaint.
37. If the person insists they do not wish to complain, we are not required to progress the complaint under this procedure. However, we should record the complaint as an anonymous complaint (including minimal information about the complaint, without any identifying information) to enable us to track trends and themes in complaints. Where the complaint is serious, or there is evidence of a problem with our services, we should also look into the matter to remedy this (and record any outcome).

#### Complaints involving more than one area or organisation

38. If a complaint relates to the actions of two or more departments / faculties / schools, we will tell the complainant who will take the lead in dealing with the complaint, and explain that they will get only one response covering all issues raised. The nature of the complaint may also require parallel procedures to be initiated (such as academic appeal or disciplinary procedures). See Complaints and appeals.
39. If we receive a complaint about the service of another organisation or public service provider, but we have no involvement in the issue, the complainant should be advised to contact the appropriate organisation directly.

40. If a complaint relates to our service and the service of another organisation or public service provider, and we have a direct interest in the issue, we will handle the complaint about the University partnership through the CHP. If we need to contact an outside body about the complaint, we will be mindful of data protection. See Part 1: Maintaining confidentiality and data protection.
41. The 'joint-service' complaints may be about such things, for example:
- a complaint made in relation to provision of third-party services, for example IT systems
  - a complaint made about a service that is contracted out, such as catering services; or
  - a complaint made to the institution about a student loan where the dissatisfaction relates to the service we have provided and the service the Student Awards Agency for Scotland has provided.
  - property maintenance, where the complainant's dissatisfaction relates to our service and that of an external facilities body
  - accommodation not directly under our ownership

#### Complaints involving more than one academic partner

42. If a complaint is received that involves more than one academic partner of the University partnership, we will tell the complainant who will take the lead in dealing with the complaint, and explain that they will only get one response covering all issues raised.
43. When a complaint involving more than one academic partner is received, the complaint handlers in the academic partners involved will liaise to discuss the issue. In some cases, they may need additional support or facilitation provided by the University. If this is required, this support may include assigning a complaint investigator from the University itself. The University complaints handler will then conduct a complaints investigation via the CHP.

#### Complaints about contracted services

44. Where we use a contractor to deliver a service on our behalf we recognise that we remain responsible and accountable for ensuring that the services provided meet the University partnership's standard (including in relation to complaints). We will either do so by:
- ensuring the contractor complies with this procedure; or
  - ensuring the contractor has their own procedure in place, which fully meets the standards in this procedure. At the end of the investigation stage of any such complaints the contractor must ensure that the complainant is signposted to the SPSO.
45. We will confirm that service users are clearly informed of the process and understand how to complain. We will also ensure that there is appropriate provision for information sharing and governance oversight where required.
46. The University partnership has discretion to investigate complaints about organisations contracted to deliver services on its behalf even where the procedure has normally been delegated.

#### Complaints about senior staff

47. Complaints about senior staff can be difficult to handle, as there may be a conflict of interest for the staff investigating the complaint. When serious complaints are raised against senior staff, it is particularly important that the investigation is conducted by an individual who is independent of the situation. We must ensure we have strong governance arrangements in place that set out clear procedures for handling such complaints.

### Complaints and other processes

48. Complaints can sometimes be confused (or overlap) with other processes, such as disciplinary or whistleblowing processes. Specific examples and guidance on how to handle these are below.

### Complaints and appeals

49. In some cases, an issue may be raised as a complaint which should be considered under alternative arrangements (for example, an academic appeal or fitness to practise appeal), or vice versa. Complaints and appeals are handled under separate processes. It is not appropriate for the same issue to be considered under both procedures.
50. Where the complaint and appeal issues can be clearly distinguished, we will identify the points to be investigated as a complaint and progress those in line with this procedure. This will include confirming the points of complaint and outcomes sought. We will also identify and set out the issues of appeal.
51. In determining which process applies, we may need to clarify our approach with the complainant (for example, where the complainant is focussed solely on the appeal outcome they may not wish to also pursue a complaint). However, we will not normally ask the complainant to resubmit issues they have already raised (for example, to reframe part of their appeal as a complaint).
52. We may also decide to complete consideration under one procedure before considering residual issues under another procedure (for example, we may delay consideration of any complaint until the academic appeal has been concluded, or vice versa). This would normally only be appropriate where it is difficult to distinguish which issues should be dealt with under which procedure.
53. In all cases, we will explain to the student which issues have been considered under which process, and signpost them to the appropriate independent review.

### Complaints and student conduct procedures

54. A concern about the conduct of another student is not a complaint, and should be handled under the academic partner's student code of conduct procedures. However, the person may wish to complain about how the University partnership handled the situation (for example, where a teacher allowed a student's behaviour to disrupt a class or exam). Where the complaint is about our service, we will consider it under the CHP.

### Complaints and service requests

55. If someone asks the University partnership to do something (for example, provide a service or deal with a problem), and this is the first time they have contacted us, this would normally be a routine service request and not a complaint.
56. Service requests can lead to complaints, if the request is not handled promptly or the person is then dissatisfied with how we provide the service.

### Complaints and staff disciplinary or whistleblowing processes

57. If the issues raised in a complaint overlap with issues raised under a staff disciplinary or whistleblowing process, we still need to respond to the complaint.
58. Our response must be careful not to share confidential information (such as anything about the whistleblowing or disciplinary procedures, or outcomes for individual staff members). It should focus on whether the University partnership failed to meet our service standards and what we have done to improve things, in general terms.
59. Staff investigating such complaints will need to take extra care to ensure that:

- we comply with all requirements of the CHP in relation to the complaint (as well as meeting the requirements of the other processes)
  - all complaint issues are addressed (sometimes issues can get missed if they are not also relevant to the overlapping process); and
  - we keep records of the investigation that can be made available to the SPSO if required. This can be problematic when the other process is confidential, because SPSO will normally require documentation of any correspondence and interviews to show how conclusions were reached. We will need to bear this in mind when planning any elements of the investigation that might overlap (for example, if staff are interviewed for the purposes of both the complaint and a disciplinary procedure, they should not be assured that any evidence given will be confidential, as it may be made available to the SPSO).
60. The SPSO's report Making complaints work for everyone has more information on supporting staff who are the subject of complaints.

#### Complaints and compensation claims

61. Where someone is seeking financial compensation only, this is not a complaint. However, in some cases the person may want to complain about the matter leading to their financial claim, and they may seek additional outcomes, such as an apology or an explanation. Where appropriate, we may consider that matter as a complaint, but deal with the financial claim separately. It may be appropriate to extend the timeframes for responding to the complaint, to consider the financial claim first.

#### Complaints and legal action

62. Where a complainant says that legal action is being actively pursued, this is not a complaint.
63. Where a complainant indicates that they are thinking about legal action, but have not yet commenced this, they should be informed that if they take such action, they should notify the complaints handler and that the complaints process, in relation to the matters that will be considered through the legal process, will be closed. Any outstanding complaints must still be addressed through the CHP.
64. If an issue has been, or is being, considered by a court, we must not consider the same issue under the CHP.

#### What to do if the CHP does not apply

65. If the issue does not meet the definition of a complaint or if it is not appropriate to handle it under this procedure (for example, due to time limits), we will explain to the complainant why we have made this decision. We will also tell them what action (if any) we will take (for example, if another procedure applies), and advise them of their right to contact the SPSO if they disagree with our decision not to respond to the issue as a complaint.
66. Where a complainant continues to contact us about the same issue, we will explain that we have already given them our final response on the matter and signpost them to the SPSO. We may also consider whether we need to take action under our Unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance.
67. The SPSO has issued a [template letter for explaining when the CHP does not apply](#).



Inverness College  
University of the Highlands and Islands

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Part 3: The complaints handling process

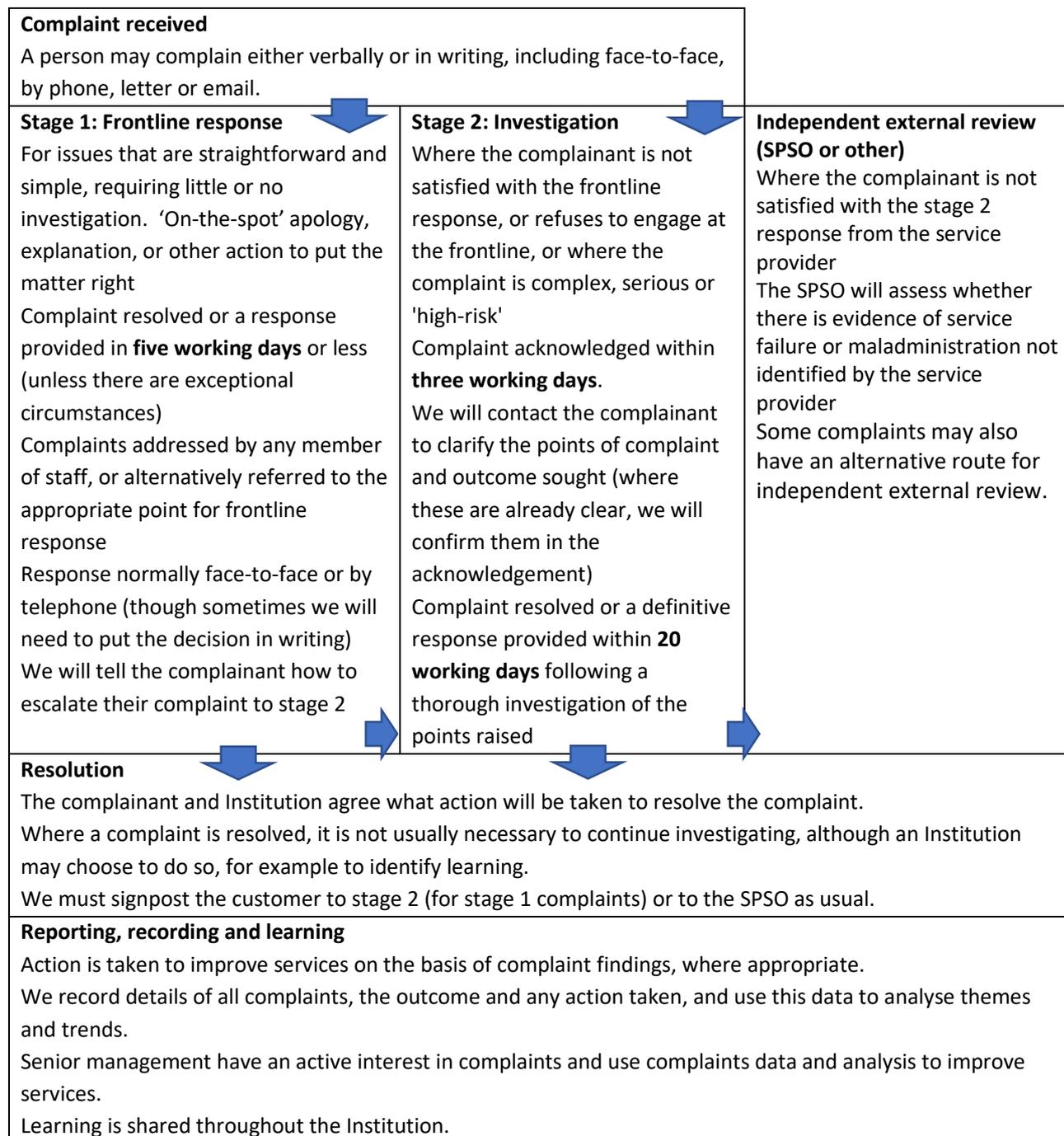
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## Part 3: The complaints handling process

1. Our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) aims to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process for responding to complaints early and locally by capable, well- trained staff. Where possible, we will resolve the complaint to the complainant’s satisfaction. Where this is not possible, we will give the complainant a clear and reasoned response to their complaint.



## Resolving the complaint

2. A complaint is resolved when both the University partnership and the complainant agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the complainant, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.
3. We will try to resolve complaints wherever possible, although we accept this will not be possible in all cases.
4. A complaint may be resolved at any point in the complaint handling process, including during the investigation stage. It is particularly important to try to resolve complaints where there is an ongoing relationship with the complainant or where the complaint relates to an ongoing issue that may give rise to future complaints if the matter is not fully resolved.
5. It may be helpful to use alternative complaint resolution approaches when trying to resolve a complaint. See [Alternative complaint resolution approaches](#).
6. Where a complaint is resolved, we do not normally need to continue looking into it or provide a response on all points of complaint. There must be a clear record of how the complaint was resolved, what action was agreed, and the complainant's agreement to this as a final outcome. In some cases it may still be appropriate to continue looking into the issue, for example where there is evidence of a wider problem or potential for useful learning. We will use our professional judgment in deciding whether it is appropriate to continue looking into a complaint that is resolved.
7. In all cases, we must record the complaint outcome (resolved) and any action taken, and signpost the complainant to stage 2 (for stage 1 complaints) or to independent external review as usual (see [Independent external review](#)).
8. If the complainant and the University partnership are not able to agree a resolution, we must follow this CHP to provide a clear and reasoned response to each of the issues raised.

## What to do when you receive a complaint

9. Members of staff receiving a complaint should consider four key questions. This will help them to either respond to the complaint quickly (at stage 1) or determine whether the complaint is more suitable for stage 2:

### **What exactly is the complaint (or complaints)?**

10. It is important to be clear exactly what the complaint is about. We may need to ask the complainant for more information and probe further to get a full understanding.
11. We will need to decide whether the issue can be defined as a complaint and whether there are circumstances that may limit our ability to respond to the complaint (such as the time limit for making complaints, confidentiality, anonymity or the need for consent). We should also consider whether the complaint is serious, high-risk or high-profile.
12. If the matter is not suitable for handling as a complaint, we will explain this to the complainant (and signpost them to SPSO). There is detailed guidance on this step in Part 2: [When to use this procedure](#).
13. In most cases, this step will be straightforward. If it is not, the complaint may need to be handled immediately at stage 2 (see [Stage 2: Investigation](#)).

### **What does the complainant want to achieve by complaining?**

14. At the outset, we will clarify the outcome the complainant wants. Of course, the complainant may not be clear about this, and we may need to probe further to find out what they expect, and whether they can be satisfied.

**Can I achieve this, or explain why not?**

15. If a staff member handling a complaint can achieve the expected outcome, for example by providing an on-the-spot apology or explain why they cannot achieve it, they should do so.
16. The complainant may expect more than we can provide. If so, we will tell them as soon as possible.
17. Complaints which can be resolved or responded to quickly should be managed at stage 1 (see Stage 1: Frontline response).

**If I cannot respond, who can help?**

18. If the complaint is simple and straightforward, but the staff member receiving the complaint cannot deal with it because, for example, they are unfamiliar with the issues or area of service involved, they should pass the complaint to someone who can respond quickly.
19. If it is not a simple and straightforward complaint that can realistically be closed within five working days (or ten, if an extension is appropriate), it should be handled immediately at stage 2. If the complainant refuses to engage at stage 1, insisting that they want their complaint investigated, it should be handled immediately at stage 2. See Stage 2: Investigation.

**Stage 1: Frontline response**

20. Frontline response aims to respond quickly (within five working days) to straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation.
21. Any member of staff may deal with complaints at this stage (including the staff member complained about, for example with an explanation or apology). The main principle is to respond to complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible.
22. We may respond to the complaint by providing an on-the-spot apology where appropriate, or explaining why the issue occurred and, where possible, what will be done to stop this happening again. We may also explain that, as an organisation that values complaints, we may use the information given when we review service standards in the future. If we consider an apology is appropriate, we may wish to follow the SPSO guidance on apology.
23. Complaints which are not suitable for frontline response should be identified early, and handled immediately at stage 2: investigation.

**Notifying staff members involved**

24. If the complaint is about the actions of another staff member, the complaint should be shared with them, where possible, before responding (although this should not prevent us responding to the complaint quickly, for example where it is clear that an apology is warranted).

**Timelines**

25. Frontline response must be completed within five working days, although in practice we would often expect to respond to the complaint much sooner. 'Day one' is always the date of receipt of the complaint (or the next working day if the complaint is received on a weekend or public holiday). Academic holidays should be counted as normal working days (except for weekends or public holidays).

**Extension to the timeline**

26. In exceptional circumstances, a short extension of time may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances (such as the availability of a key staff member). Extensions must be agreed with an appropriate manager. We will tell the complainant about the reasons for the extension, and when they can expect a response. The maximum extension that can be granted is five working days (that is, no more than ten working days in total from the date of receipt).

27. If a complaint will take more than five working days to look into, it should be handled at stage 2 immediately. The only exception to this is where the complaint is simple and could normally be handled within five working days, but it is not possible to begin immediately (for example, due to the absence of a key staff member). In such cases, the complaint may still be handled at stage 1 if it is clear that it can be handled within the extended timeframe of up to ten working days.
28. If a complaint has not been closed within ten working days, it should be escalated to stage 2 for a final response.

#### Closing the complaint at the frontline response stage

29. If we convey the decision face-to-face or on the telephone, we are not required to write to the complainant as well (although we may choose to). We must:
- tell the complainant the outcome of the complaint (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld)
  - explain the reasons for our decision (or the agreed action taken to resolve the complaint (see Resolving the complaint)); and
  - explain that the complainant can escalate the complaint to stage 2 if they remain dissatisfied and how to do so (we should not signpost to the SPSO until the complainant has completed stage 2).
30. We will keep a full and accurate record of the decision given to the complainant. If we are not able to contact the complainant by phone, or speak to them in person, we will provide a written response to the complaint where an email or postal address is provided, covering the points above.
31. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, we will share with them any part of the complaint response which relates to them, (unless there are compelling reasons not to).
32. The complaint should then be closed and the complaints system updated accordingly.
33. At the earliest opportunity after the closure of the complaint, the staff member handling the complaint should consider whether any learning has been identified. See Part 4: Learning from complaints.

#### Stage 2: Investigation

34. Not all complaints are suitable for frontline response and not all complaints will be satisfactorily addressed at that stage. Stage 2 is appropriate where:
- the complainant is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline stage, insisting they wish their complaint to be investigated. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the complainant must escalate the complaint within six months of when they first knew of the problem or within two months of the stage 1 response, whichever is later (see Part 2: Time limits for making a complaint)
  - the complaint is not simple and straightforward (for example where the complainant has raised a number of issues, or where information from several sources is needed before we can establish what happened and/or what should have happened); or
  - the complaint relates to serious, high-risk or high-profile issues (see Part 2: Serious, high-risk or high-profile complaints).
35. An investigation aims to explore the complaint in more depth and establish all the relevant facts. The aim is to resolve the complaint where possible, or to give the complainant a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position. Wherever possible, complaints should be investigated by someone not involved in the complaint (for example, a line manager or a manager from a different area).

36. Details of the complaint must be recorded on the complaints system. Where appropriate, this will be done as a continuation of frontline response. If the investigation stage follows a frontline response, the officer responsible for the investigation should have access to all case notes and associated information.
37. The beginning of stage 2 is a good time to consider whether complaint resolution approaches other than investigation may be helpful (see Alternative complaint resolution approaches).

#### Acknowledging the complaint

38. Complaints must be acknowledged within three working days of receipt at stage 2.
39. We must issue the acknowledgement in a format which is accessible to the complainant, taking into account their preferred method of contact.
40. Where the points of complaint and expected outcomes are clear from the complaint, we must set these out in the acknowledgement and ask the complainant to get in touch with us immediately if they disagree. See Agreeing the points of complaint and outcome sought
41. Where the points of complaint and expected outcomes are not clear, we must tell the complainant we will contact them to discuss this.

#### Agreeing the points of complaint and outcome sought

42. It is important to be clear from the start of stage 2 about the points of complaint to be investigated and what outcome the complainant is seeking. We may also need to manage the complainant's expectations about the scope of our investigation.
43. Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are clear, we can confirm our understanding of these with the complainant when acknowledging the complaint (see Acknowledging the complaint).
44. Where the points of complaint and outcome sought are not clear, we must contact the complainant to confirm these. We will normally need to speak to the complainant (by phone or face-to-face) to do this effectively. In some cases it may be possible to clarify complaints in writing. The key point is that we need to be sure we and the complainant have a shared understanding of the complaint. When contacting the complainant we will be respectful of their stated preferred method of contact. We should keep a clear record of any discussion with the complainant.
45. In all cases, we must have a clear shared understanding of:

#### **What are the points of complaint to be investigated?**

While the complaint may appear to be clear, agreeing the points of complaint at the outset ensures there is a shared understanding and avoids the complaint changing or confusion arising at a later stage. The points of complaint should be specific enough to direct the investigation, but broad enough to include any multiple and specific points of concern about the same issue.

We will make every effort to agree the points of complaint with the complainant (alternative complaint resolution approaches may be helpful at this stage). In very rare cases, it may not be possible to agree the points of complaint (for example, if the complainant insists on an unreasonably large number of complaints being separately investigated, or on framing their complaint in an abusive way). We will manage any such cases in accordance with our Unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance bearing in mind that we should continue to investigate the complaint (as we understand it) wherever possible.

#### **Is there anything we can't consider under the CHP?**

We must explain if there are any points that are not suitable for handling under the CHP (see Part 2: What to do if the CHP does not apply).

### **What outcome does the complainant want to achieve?**

Asking what outcome the complainant is seeking helps direct the investigation and enables us to focus on resolving the complaint where possible.

### **Are the complainant's expectations realistic and achievable?**

It may be that the complainant expects more than we can provide, or has unrealistic expectations about the scope of the investigation. If so, we should make this clear to the complainant as soon as possible.

### Notifying staff members involved

46. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, we will notify the staff member/s involved (including where the staff member is not named, but can be identified from the complaint). We will:

- share the complaint information with the staff member/s (unless there are compelling reasons not to)
- advise them how the complaint will be handled, how they will be kept updated and how we will share the complaint response with them
- discuss their willingness to engage with alternative complaint resolution approaches (where applicable); and
- signpost the staff member/s to a contact person who can provide support and information on what to expect from the complaint process (this must not be the person investigating or signing off the complaint response).

47. If it is likely that internal disciplinary processes may be involved, the requirements of that process should also be met. See also Part 2: Complaints and staff disciplinary or whistleblowing processes.

### Investigating the complaint

48. It is important to plan the investigation before beginning. The staff member investigating the complaint should consider what information they have and what they need about:

- what happened? (this could include, for example, records of phone calls or meetings, work requests, recollections of staff members or internal emails)
- what should have happened? (this should include any relevant policies or procedures that apply); and
- is there a difference between what happened and what should have happened, and is the University partnership responsible?

49. In some cases, information may not be readily available. We will balance the need for the information against the resources required to obtain it, taking into account the seriousness of the issue (for example, it may be appropriate to contact a former employee, if possible, where they hold key information about a serious complaint).

50. If we need to share information within or outwith the organisation, we will be mindful of our obligations under data protection legislation. See Part 1: Maintaining confidentiality and data protection.

51. The SPSO has resources for conducting investigations, including:

- [Investigation plan template](#)
- [Decision-making tool for complaint investigators](#)

### *Alternative complaint resolution approaches*

52. Some complex complaints, or complaints where complainants and other interested parties have become entrenched in their position, may require a different approach to resolving the matter. Where we think it is appropriate, we may use alternative complaint resolution approaches such as complaint resolution discussions, mediation or conciliation to try to resolve the matter and to reduce the risk of the complaint escalating further. If mediation is attempted, a suitably trained and qualified mediator should be used. Alternative complaint resolution approaches may help both parties to understand what has caused the complaint, and so are more likely to lead to mutually satisfactory solutions.
53. Alternative complaint resolution approaches may be used to resolve the complaint entirely, or to support one part of the process, such as understanding the complaint, or exploring the complainant's desired outcome.
54. The SPSO has [guidance on alternative complaint resolution approaches](#).
55. If the University partnership and the complainant (and any staff members involved) agree to using alternative complaint resolution approaches, it is likely that an extension to the timeline will need to be agreed. This should not discourage the use of these approaches.

### *Meeting with the complainant during the investigation*

56. To effectively investigate the complaint, it may be necessary to arrange a meeting with the complainant. Where a meeting takes place, we will always be mindful of the requirement to investigate complaints (including holding any meetings) within 20 working days wherever possible. Where there are difficulties arranging a meeting, this may provide grounds for extending the timeframe.
57. As a matter of good practice, a written record of the meeting should be completed and provided to the complainant. Alternatively, and by agreement with the person making the complaint, we may provide a record of the meeting in another format. We will notify the person making the complaint of the timescale within which we expect to provide the record of the meeting.

### *Timelines*

58. The following deadlines are appropriate to cases at the investigation stage (counting day one as the day of receipt, or the next working day if the complaint was received on a weekend or public holiday). Academic holidays should be counted as normal working days (except for weekends or public holidays).
- Complaints must be acknowledged within **three working days**
  - a full response to the complaint should be provided as soon as possible but not later than **20 working days** from the time the complaint was received for investigation.

### *Extension to the timeline*

59. Not all investigations will be able to meet this deadline. For example, some complaints are so complex that they require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond the 20 working day timeline. It is important to be realistic and clear with the complainant about timeframes, and to advise them early if we think it will not be possible to meet the 20 day timeframe, and why. We should bear in mind that extended delays may have a detrimental effect on the complainant.
60. Any extension must be approved by an appropriate manager. We will keep the complainant and any member/s of staff complained about updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. We will contact the complainant and any member/s of staff complained about at least once every 20 working days to update them on the progress of the investigation.

61. The reasons for an extension might include the following:

- essential accounts or statements, crucial to establishing the circumstances of the case, are needed from staff or others but the person is not available because of long-term sickness or leave
- we cannot obtain further essential information within normal timescales; or
- the complainant has agreed to alternative complaint resolution approaches as a potential route for resolution.
- These are only a few examples, and we will judge the matter in relation to each complaint. However, an extension would be the exception.

62. **Appendix 1** provides further information on timelines

#### Closing the complaint at the investigation stage

63. The response to the complaint should be in writing (or by the complainant's preferred method of contact) and must be signed off by a manager or officer who is empowered to provide the final response on behalf of the University partnership.

64. We will tell the complainant the outcome of the complaint (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld). The quality of the complaint response is very important and in terms of good practice should:

- be clear and easy to understand, written in a way that is person-centred and non-confrontational
- avoid technical terms, but where these must be used, an explanation of the term should be provided
- address all the issues raised and demonstrate that each
- element has been fully and fairly investigated
- include an apology where things have gone wrong (this is different to an expression of empathy: see the SPSO's guidance on apology)
- highlight any area of disagreement and explain why no further action can be taken
- indicate that a named member of staff is available to clarify any aspect of the letter; and
- indicate that if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the local process, they may seek a review (see Independent external review).

65. Where a complaint has been resolved, the response does not need to provide a decision on all points of complaint, but should instead confirm the resolution agreed. See Resolving the complaint.

66. If the complaint is about the actions of a particular staff member/s, we will share with them any part of the complaint response which relates to them, (unless there are compelling reasons not to).

67. We will record the decision, and details of how it was communicated to the complainant, on the complaints system.

68. The SPSO has guidance on responding to a complaint:

- [Template decision letter](#)
- [Apology guidance](#)

69. At the earliest opportunity after the closure of the complaint, the staff member handling the complaint should consider whether any learning has been identified. See Part 4: Learning from complaints.

#### Independent external review

70. Once the investigation stage has been completed, if the customer is still dissatisfied with the decision or the way we dealt with the complaint, they can ask the SPSO and/or, the Scottish

Qualifications Authority (SQA) (or other awarding body) to look at it. For qualifications that are regulated, if the customer remains dissatisfied with the way the awarding body has handled a complaint they may complain to the qualifications regulator, SQA Accreditation.

71. It is important for students to be given full and clear information about the types of independent external review available, to ensure that they can progress their complaint to the organisation best-placed to achieve the outcome they are seeking:

- The SPSO considers complaints about the quality of service and maladministration, which may include issues surrounding course delivery (for example, poor quality of photocopying on course materials, or failure to properly communicate changes to class times and locations). The SPSO may also look at the way we have handled complaints raised by a student (for example, concerns about plagiarism or abusive communication from other students), or the way we have handled a complaint.

There are some subject areas that are outwith the SPSO's jurisdiction. Importantly, the SPSO are not able to look at academic judgment, and they do not have the power to revise course awards.

It is the SPSO's role to determine whether an individual complaint is one that they can consider (and to what extent), and all investigation responses must signpost to the SPSO, as well as to the SQA (or other awarding body) where relevant.

- SQA (or other awarding body) is responsible for safeguarding quality in assessment and certification of the qualifications that it awards through colleges and other approved centres. SQA (or other awarding body) stipulates how further education centres must operate and fulfil their functions in terms of qualifications assessment and certification, via a set of standard terms. Examples of complaints that the SQA (or other awarding body) may consider include situations where a candidate believes that there has been perceived unfairness in assessment arrangements, assessment feedback or re-assessment opportunities.

72. Students seeking a change to academic judgement can only do this through an academic appeals process.

73. If a customer is dissatisfied with the response from the awarding body, they may ask SQA Accreditation to consider their complaint further.

- SQA Accreditation accredits a wide range of qualifications other than degrees and regulates those awarding bodies that submit qualifications for accreditation. SQA Accreditation may investigate complaints about the accredited qualification or the awarding body. SQA Accreditation may also investigate complaints of malpractice and/or maladministration in relation to the qualification delivery, assessment and certification (once these have been considered by the awarding body).

74. In all cases, the complaint must first have been considered by the University partnership.

#### Signposting to the SPSO

75. Once the investigation stage has been completed, the customer has the right to approach the SPSO if they remain dissatisfied. We must make clear to the customer:

- their right to ask the SPSO to consider the complaint
- the time limit for doing so; and
- how to contact the SPSO.

76. The SPSO considers complaints from people who remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of our complaints procedure. The SPSO looks at issues such as service failure and maladministration (administrative fault), and the way we have handled the complaint. There are some subject

areas that are outwith the SPSO's jurisdiction, but it is the SPSO's role to determine whether an individual complaint is one that they can consider (and to what extent). All investigation responses must signpost to the SPSO.

77. The SPSO recommends that we use the wording on the following page to inform customers of their right to ask the SPSO to consider the complaint. This information should only be included on the University partnership's final response to the complaint.

### Information about the SPSO

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland. This includes complaints about further and higher education. The SPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. It is not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

If you remain dissatisfied when you have had a final response from the University of the Highlands and Islands partnership, you can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint. You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through the [organisation]'s Complaints Handling Procedure
- it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about, and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of this letter (our final response to your complaint). You can do this online at [www.spso.org.uk/complain](http://www.spso.org.uk/complain) or call them on Freephone 0800 377 7330.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. organisations who may be able to assist you are:

- Citizens Advice Scotland
- Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO

Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh EH7 4NS

(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first). Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online: [www.spso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spso.org.uk](http://www.spso.org.uk)

### Post-closure contact

78. If a complainant contacts us for clarification when they have received our final response, we may have further discussion with the complainant to clarify our response and answer their questions. However, if the complainant is dissatisfied with our response or does not accept our findings, we

will explain that we have already given them our final response on the matter and signpost them to the SPSO.

## Appendix 1 – Timelines

### General

1. References to timelines throughout the CHP relate to working days. We do not count non-working days, for example weekends, public holidays and days of industrial action where our service has been interrupted.
2. We do not count academic holidays as non-working days. Complaints received during academic holidays should follow the same timelines as set out for frontline response and investigation, unless there are special circumstances which would require an extension to these timelines.

### Timelines at frontline response (stage 1)

3. We will aim to achieve frontline response within five working days. The date of receipt is day one, and the response should be provided (or the complaint escalated) on day five, at the latest.
4. If we have extended the timeline at the frontline response stage in line with the CHP, the response should be provided (or the complaint escalated) on day ten, at the latest.

### Transferring cases from frontline response to investigation

5. If the complainant wants to escalate the complaint to the investigation stage, the case must be passed for investigation without delay. In practice this will mean on the same day that the complainant is told this will happen.

### Timelines at investigation (stage 2)

6. For complaints at the investigation stage, day one is:
  - the day the case is transferred from the frontline stage to the investigation stage
  - the day the complainant asks for an investigation or expresses
  - dissatisfaction after a decision at the frontline response stage; or
  - the date we receive the complaint, if it is handled immediately at stage 2.
7. We must acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receipt at stage 2 i.e. by day three.
8. We should respond in full to the complaint by day 20, at the latest. We have 20 working days to investigate the complaint, regardless of any time taken to consider it at the frontline response stage.
9. Exceptionally, we may need longer than the 20 working day limit for a full response. If so, we will explain the reasons to the complainant, and update them (and any staff involved) at least once every 20 working days.

### Frequently asked questions

*What happens if an extension is granted at stage 1, but then the complaint is escalated?*

1. The extension at stage 1 does not affect the timeframes at stage 2. The stage 2 timeframes apply from the day the complaint was escalated (we have 20 working days from this date, unless an extension is granted).

*What happens if we cannot meet an extended timeframe?*

2. If we cannot meet the extended timeframe at stage 1, the complaint should be escalated to stage 2. The maximum timeframe allowed for a stage 1 response is ten working days.
3. If we cannot meet the extended timeframe at stage 2, a further extension may be approved by an appropriate manager if there are clear reasons for this. This should only occur in exceptional circumstances (the original extension should allow sufficient time to realistically investigate and respond to the complaint). Where a further extension is agreed, we should explain the situation to the complainant and give them a revised timeframe for completion. We must update the complainant and any staff involved in the investigation at least once every 20 working days.

*What happens when a complainant asks for stage 2 consideration a long time after receiving a frontline response?*

4. Unless exceptional circumstances exist, complainants should bring a stage 2 complaint within six months of learning about the problem, or within two months of receiving the stage 1 response (whichever is latest). See Part 2: Time limits for making a complaint.

Appendix 2 – The complaint handling process (flowchart for staff)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>A person may complain verbally or in writing, including face-to-face, by phone, letter or email. Your first consideration is whether the complaint should be dealt with at stage 1 (frontline response) or stage 2 (investigation).</p> |  |
| ↓  | ↓  |
| <p><b>Stage 1: Frontline response</b><br/>Always try to respond quickly, wherever we can</p>   | <p><b>Stage 2: Investigation</b><br/>Investigate where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complainant is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage with attempts to handle the complaint at stage 1</li> <li>• It is clear that the complaint requires investigation from the outset</li> </ul> |
| ↓  | ↓  |
| <p>Record the complaint and notify any staff complained about</p>  | <p>Record the complaint and notify any staff complained about<br/>Acknowledge the complaint within <b>three working days</b></p>   |
| ↓  | ↓  |
|  | <p>Contact the complainant to agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Points of complaint</li> <li>• Outcome sought</li> <li>• Manage expectations (where required)</li> </ul> <p><i>(these can be confirmed in the acknowledgement where the complaint is straightforward)</i></p>                                    |
| ↓  | ↓  |
| <p>Respond to the complaint within <b>five working days</b> unless there are exceptional circumstances</p>   | <p>Respond to the complaint as soon as possible, but within <b>20 working days</b> unless there is a clear reason for extending the timescale</p>  |
| ↓  | ↓  |
| <p>Is the complainant satisfied?<br/>You must always tell the complainant how to escalate to stage 2</p>   | <p>Communicate the decision, normally in writing<br/>Signpost the complainant to SPSO and advise of time limits</p>  |
| <p>(Yes) Record outcome and learning, and close complaint.<br/>(No) -&gt; to stage 2</p>   | <p>Record outcome and learning, and close complaint</p>  |
| ↓  | ↓  |
| <p>Follow up on agreed actions flowing from the complaint<br/>Share any learning points</p>  |  |



Inverness College  
University of the Highlands and Islands

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Part 4: Governance

| Version | Description                                     | Date          |
|---------|---|---------------|
| 0.1     | Drafting based on SPSO MCHP                     | March 2020    |
| 0.5     | Finalise drafting                               | October 2020  |
| 0.6     | Amendments following SPSO compliance assessment | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Approved by Policy Ownership Group              | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Endorsed by Partnership Council                 | TBC           |
| 1.0     | Approved by FGPC; published to website          | TBC           |

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## Part 4: Governance

### Roles and responsibilities

1. All staff will be aware of:
  - the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP)
  - how to handle and record complaints at the frontline response stage
  - who they can refer a complaint to, in case they are not able to handle the matter
  - the need to try and resolve complaints early and as close to the point of service delivery as possible; and
  - their clear authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with.
2. Training on this procedure will be part of the induction process for all new staff. Refresher training will be provided for current staff on a regular basis.
3. Senior management will ensure that:
  - The University of the Highlands and Islands partnership's final position on a complaint investigation is signed off by an appropriate manager or officer in order to provide assurance that this is the definitive response of the University partnership and that the complainant's concerns have been taken seriously
  - it maintains overall responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of complaints handling (including complaints about contracted services)
  - it has an active role in, and understanding of, the CHP (although not necessarily involved in the decision-making process of complaint handling)
  - mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent approach to the way complaints handling information is managed, monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels in University partnership; and
  - complaints information is used to improve services, and this is evident from regular publications.
4. **Depute Principal – Planning & Student Experience:** The DP (PSE) provides leadership and direction in ways that guide and enable us to perform effectively across all services. This includes ensuring that there is an effective Complaints Handling Procedure, with a robust investigation process that demonstrates how we learn from the complaints we receive. The DP (PSE) may take a personal interest in all or some complaints, or may delegate responsibility for the CHP to senior staff. Regular management reports assure the DP (PSE) of the quality of complaints performance.
5. The DP (PSE) is also responsible for ensuring that there are governance and accountability arrangements in place in relation to complaints about contractors. This includes:
  - ensuring performance monitoring for complaints is a feature of the service/management agreements between the University partnership and contractors
  - setting clear objectives in relation to this complaints procedure and putting appropriate monitoring systems in place to provide the University partnership with an overview of how the contractor is meeting its objectives.
6. **Members of SMT and Quality Manager:** On the DP (PSE)'s behalf, members of SMT and Quality Manager may be responsible for:
  - managing complaints and the way we learn from them
  - overseeing the implementation of actions required as a result of a complaint
  - investigating complaints; and
  - deputising for the DP (PSE) on occasion.

They may also be responsible for preparing and signing off decisions for complainants, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint. However, **members of SMT and Quality Manager** may decide to delegate some elements of complaints handling (such as investigations and the drafting of response letters) to other senior staff. Where this happens, **members of SMT and Quality Manager** should retain ownership and accountability for the management and reporting of complaints.

7. Directors/heads of School / Managers of Services: May be involved in the operational investigation and management of complaints handling. As senior officers they may be responsible for preparing and signing decision letters to customers, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint.
8. Heads of school/college/service: May be involved in the operational investigation and management of complaints handling. As senior officers they may be responsible for preparing and signing decision letters to complainants, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint.
9. Complaints investigator: The complaints investigator is responsible and accountable for the management of the investigation. They may work in a particular **School or service** or as part of a centralised team i.e. **Quality**, and will be involved in the investigation and in coordinating all aspects of the response to the complainant. This may include preparing a comprehensive written report, including details of any procedural changes in service delivery and identifying wider opportunities for learning across the institution.
10. The **Professional Development Manager** is responsible for ensuring all new staff receive training on the CHP as part of the induction process, and that refresher training is provided for current staff on a regular basis.
11. The organisation's SPSO liaison officer: **This role is fulfilled by the Quality Manager and** may include providing complaints information in an orderly, structured way within requested timescales, providing comments on factual accuracy on our behalf in response to SPSO reports, and confirming and verifying that recommendations have been implemented.

Commented [LC1]: Remove para 8 as duplicate of above

#### Recording, reporting, learning from and publicising complaints

12. Complaints provide valuable feedback. One of the aims of the CHP is to identify opportunities to improve services across the University partnership. By recording and analysing complaints data, we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.
13. We also have arrangements in place to ensure complaints about contractors are recorded, reported on and publicised in line with this CHP.

#### Recording complaints

14. It is important to record suitable data to enable us to fully investigate and respond to the complaint, as well as using our complaint information to track themes and trends. As a minimum, we should record:
  - the complainant's name and contact details
  - the date the complaint was received
  - the nature of the complaint
  - the service the complaint refers to
  - staff member responsible for handling the complaint
  - action taken and outcome at frontline response stage
  - date the complaint was closed at the frontline response stage

- date the investigation stage was initiated (if applicable)
  - action taken and outcome at investigation stage (if applicable)
  - date the complaint was closed at the investigation stage (if applicable); and
  - the underlying cause of the complaint and any remedial action taken.
15. If the complainant does not want to provide any of this information, we will reassure them that it will be managed appropriately, and record what we can.
16. Individual complaint files will be stored in line with our document retention policy.

#### Learning from complaints

17. We must have clear systems in place to act on issues identified in complaints. As a minimum, we must:
- seek to identify the root cause of complaints
  - take action to reduce the risk of recurrence; and
  - systematically review complaints performance reports to improve service delivery.
18. Learning may be identified from individual complaints (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not) and from analysis of complaints data.
19. Where we have identified the need for service improvement in response to an individual complaint, we will take appropriate action, including:
- the action needed to improve services must be authorised by an appropriate manager
  - an officer (or team) should be designated the 'owner' of the issue, with responsibility for ensuring the action is taken
  - a target date must be set for the action to be taken
  - the designated individual must follow up to ensure that the action is taken within the agreed timescale
  - where appropriate, performance in the service area should be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved; and
  - any learning points should be shared with relevant staff.
20. SPSO has guidance on Learning from complaints.
21. Senior management will review the information reported on complaints regularly to ensure that any trends or wider issues which may not be obvious from individual complaints are quickly identified and addressed. Where we identify the need for service improvement, we will take appropriate action (as set out above). Where appropriate, performance in the service area should be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

#### Reporting of complaints

22. We have a process for the internal reporting of complaints information, including analysis of complaints trends. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.
23. We will report at least quarterly to senior management and at least annually to the governing body on:
- performance statistics, in line with the complaints performance indicators published by SPSO
  - analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints (this should include highlighting where there are areas where few or no complaints are received, which may indicate either good practice or that there are barriers to complaining in that area).

#### Publicising complaints information

24. We publish on a quarterly basis information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services.

25. This demonstrates the improvements resulting from complaints and shows that complaints can help to improve our services. It also helps ensure transparency in our complaints handling service and will help to show that we value complaints.
26. We will publish an annual complaints performance report on our website in line with SPSO requirements, and provide this to the SPSO on request. This summarises and builds on the quarterly reports we have produced about our services. It includes:
  - performance statistics, in line with the complaints performance indicators published by the SPSO; and
  - complaint trends and the actions that have been or will be taken to improve services as a result.
27. These reports must be easily accessible to members of the public and available in alternative formats as requested.



Inverness College  
University of the Highlands and Islands

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Part 5: Guide for complainants

| Version | Description                                     | Date          |
|---------|---|---------------|
| 0.1     | Drafting based on SPSO MCHP                     | March 2020    |
| 0.5     | Finalise drafting                               | October 2020  |
| 0.6     | Amendments following SPSO compliance assessment | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Approved by Policy Ownership Group              | December 2020 |
| 0.9     | Endorsed by Partnership Council                 | TBC           |
| 1.0     | Approved by FGPC; published to website          | TBC           |

The University of the Highlands and Islands Partnership is committed to providing an excellent education and high-quality services to our students from enrolment to graduation.

**We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.**

1. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This leaflet describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

**What is a complaint?**

2. We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

**What can I complain about?**

3. You can complain about things like:

- the admissions process
  - the disciplinary process
  - a request for a service or for information which has not been actioned or answered
  - wrong information about academic programmes or college services
  - the quality and availability of facilities and learning resource
  - accessibility of our buildings or services
  - failure or refusal to provide a service
  - inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
  - the quality of facilities or learning resources
  - dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual (although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the institution)
  - failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
  - failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
  - conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor (except where there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves: see Complaints about contracted services); or
  - disagreement with a decision, (except where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector).
4. Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

**What can't I complain about?**

5. There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:
  - a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
  - a disagreement with academic judgment
  - a concern about student conduct (see Complaints and student conduct procedures)
  - a routine first-time request for a service (see Complaints and service requests)

- a request for compensation only (see Complaints and compensation claims)
  - an insurance claim
  - issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (see Complaints and legal action)
  - disagreement with a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector (such as an appeal about an academic decision on assessment or admission – see Complaints and appeals)
  - a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts, or the Environmental Information Regulations
  - a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
  - a concern raised internally by a member of staff (which was not about a service they received, such as a whistleblowing concern)
  - concerns about services outwith the institution’s delegated responsibilities (e.g. conference and accommodation services to commercial clients)
  - a concern about a child or an adult’s safety
  - an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have
  - a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision
  - abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our institution or staff where such actions would be covered by our Unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance; or
  - a concern about the actions or service of a different organisation, where we have no involvement in the issue (except where the other organisation is delivering services on our behalf.
6. If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.

#### Who can complain?

7. Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else’s behalf, you will normally need their written consent. Please also read the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

#### How do I complain?

8. You can complain in person, by phone, in writing, by email, or via our complaints form. Our contact details are below.
9. It is easier for us to address complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff within the department you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve the issue.
10. When complaining, please tell us:
- your full name and contact details
  - as much as you can about the complaint
  - what has gone wrong; and
  - what outcome you are seeking.

### Our contact details

Please contact [quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk) to lodge your complaint, or use the complaints form on the website: <https://www.inverness.uhi.ac.uk/about-us/complaints-handling/>

### How long do I have to make a complaint?

11. Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:
  - the event you want to complain about; or
  - finding out that you have a reason to complain.
12. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

### What happens when I have complained?

13. We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

### Stage 1: Frontline response

14. We aim to respond to complaints quickly (where possible, when you first tell us about the issue). This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem.
15. We will give you our decision at stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
16. If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage 2. You must normally ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2 either:
  - within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
  - within two months of receiving your stage 1 response (if this is later).
17. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

### Stage 2: Investigation

18. Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: where the customer remains dissatisfied after stage 1 and those that clearly require investigation, and so are handled directly at this stage. If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.
19. When using stage 2:
  - we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
  - we will confirm our understanding of the complaint we will investigate and what outcome you are looking for
  - we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (in some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation); and
  - where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days.

20. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated on progress.

### What if I'm still dissatisfied?

21. After we have given you our final decision, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) or the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) (or other awarding body) to look at it. For qualifications that are regulated, if you remain dissatisfied with the way the awarding body has handled your complaint then you may complain to the qualifications regulator, SQA Accreditation.
22. The SPSO are not able to look at academic judgement and do not have the power to revise course awards. This can only be achieved through an academic appeals process. The SPSO consider complaints about the quality of service and maladministration, which may include issues surrounding course delivery.
23. Further information on who to approach about your complaint is available from Inverness College UHI website : <https://www.inverness.uhi.ac.uk/about-us/complaints-handling/> . In all cases, the complaint must first have been considered by the University partnership.

The SPSO are an independent organisation that investigates complaints. They are not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through the *[organisation]*'s complaints handling procedure
- it is less than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO will ask you to complete a complaint form and provide a copy of our final response to your complaint. You can do this online at

[www.spsos.org.uk/complain/form](http://www.spsos.org.uk/complain/form) or call them on Freephone 0800 377 7330.

You may wish to get independent support or advocacy to help you progress your complaint. See the section on **Getting help to make your complaint** below.

The SPSO's contact details are:

SPSO

Bridgeside House

99 McDonald Road

Edinburgh

EH7 4NS

(if you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first)

Their freepost address is:

FREEPOST SPSO

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Freephone:     | 0800 377 7330  |
| Online contact | <a href="http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us">www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us</a> |
| Website:       | <a href="http://www.spsso.org.uk">www.spsso.org.uk</a>                       |

### Getting help to make your complaint

24. We understand that you may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.
25. Useful contact details:
- Student Support [StudentSupport.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:StudentSupport.ic@uhi.ac.uk)
  - Highlands and Islands Student Association (Inverness): [hisa.inverness@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:hisa.inverness@uhi.ac.uk)
26. We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, please tell us in person, [contact us on \[x\]](#), or email us at [quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk).

Commented [NO1]: AP Links required

Commented [LC2R1]: Need main Q line

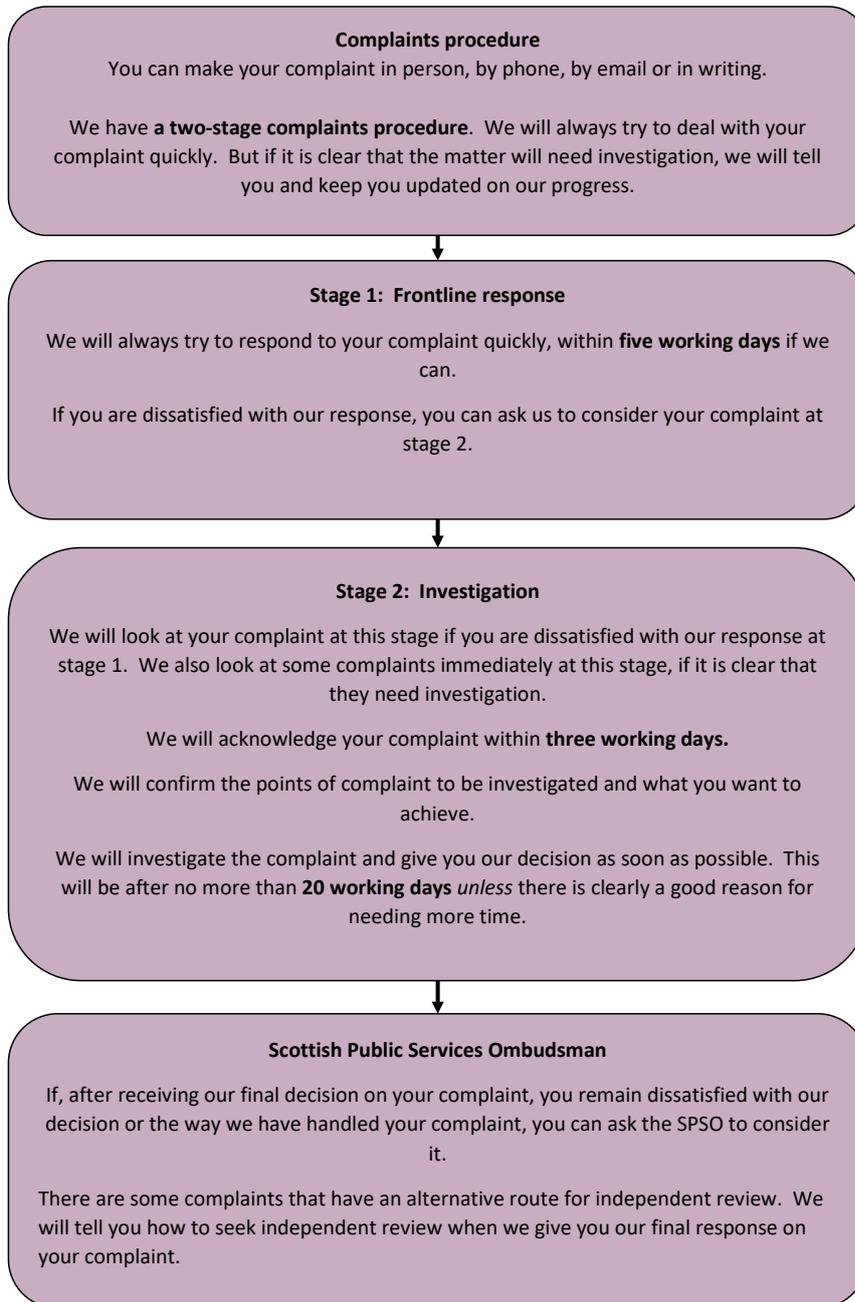
### Our contact details

27. Please contact us by the following means:

[Quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Quality.unit.ic@uhi.ac.uk)

We can also give you this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio and Braille).

### Quick guide to our complaints procedure



**Board of Management**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>   | Schedule of Board and Committee meetings 2021-22  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]  | Lisa Ross, Board Secretary  |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   | Board of Management   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>  | 01 April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>   | 25 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>  | <p>Draft Schedule of Board and Committee Meetings for the year 2021-22.</p> <p>This has been aligned with the schedule of North Highland College to ensure that there are no clashes for the Director of Finance.</p> <p>Members are asked to consider the dates, days and times of meetings.</p> |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]  | The Board is asked to approve the schedule of board and committee meetings for 2021-22  |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change | Compliance – Inverness College Standing Orders  |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>   | Yes / No<br>If yes, please specify:   |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>   | Yes / No<br>If yes, please specify:<br>Operational:<br>Organisational: Potential governance failure if meetings not held.   |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | Yes/No<br>If yes, please specify:   |
| <b>Consultation:</b>  |   |

## ITEM 04

|   |  |
|---|--|
| [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  |  |
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]   | Non confidential   |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]  | Yes  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                            |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)  | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                       | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)   | Other (please give further details)  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

INVERNESS COLLEGE UHI - BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETINGS - 2021/2022 SCHEDULE

|     | Aug-20 | September | October    | November | December   | Jan-21 | February | March | April      | May | June | July       |
|-----|--------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|--------|----------|-------|------------|-----|------|------------|
| Sun | 1      |           |            |          |            | 31     |          |       |            | 1   |      |            |
| Mon | 2      |           |            | 1        |            |        |          |       |            | 2   |      |            |
| Tue | 3      |           |            | 2        | Audit      |        | 1        | 1     |            | 3   |      |            |
| Wed | 4      | 1         |            | 3        |            | 1      |          | 2     |            | 4   | 1    |            |
| Thu | 5      | 2         |            | 4        | Chairs Etc | 2      |          | 3     | Chairs Etc | 5   | 2    | Chairs Etc |
| Fri | 6      | 3         | 1          | 5        |            | 3      |          | 4     |            | 6   | 3    | 1          |
| Sat | 7      | 4         | 2          | 6        |            | 4      |          | 5     |            | 7   | 4    | 2          |
| Sun | 8      | 5         | 3          | 7        |            | 5      |          | 6     |            | 8   | 5    | 3          |
| Mon | 9      | 6         | 4          | 8        |            | 6      |          | 7     |            | 9   | 6    | 4          |
| Tue | 10     | 7         | 5          | BOM      | 9          | 7      | BOM      | 8     | Audit      | 10  | 7    | Audit      |
| Wed | 11     | 8         | 6          |          | 10         | 8      |          | 9     |            | 11  | 8    | 6          |
| Thu | 12     | 9         | Chairs Etc | 7        | 11         | HR     | 9        | 10    | BOM        | 10  | HR   | 7          |
| Fri | 13     | 10        |            | 8        | 12         | 10     |          | 11    |            | 13  | 10   | 8          |
| Sat | 14     | 11        |            | 9        | 13         | 11     |          | 12    |            | 14  | 11   | 9          |
| Sun | 15     | 12        |            | 10       | 14         | 12     |          | 13    |            | 15  | 12   | 10         |
| Mon | 16     | 13        |            | 11       | 15         | 13     |          | 14    |            | 16  | 13   | 11         |
| Tue | 17     | 14        | Audit      | 12       | 16         | LT&R   | 14       | 15    | LT&R       | 17  | 14   | LT&R       |
| Wed | 18     | 15        |            | 13       | 17         | 15     |          | 16    |            | 18  | 15   | 13         |
| Thu | 19     | 16        | HR         | 14       | 18         | 16     |          | 17    | F&GP       | 19  | 16   | F&GP       |
| Fri | 20     | 17        |            | 15       | 19         | 17     |          | 18    |            | 20  | 17   | 15         |
| Sat | 21     | 18        |            | 16       | 20         | 18     |          | 19    |            | 21  | 18   | 16         |
| Sun | 22     | 19        |            | 17       | 21         | 19     |          | 20    |            | 22  | 19   | 17         |
| Mon | 23     | 20        |            | 18       | 22         | 20     |          | 21    |            | 23  | 20   | 18         |
| Tue | 24     | 21        | LT&R       | 19       | 23         | 21     |          | 22    |            | 24  | 21   | 19         |
| Wed | 25     | 22        |            | 20       | 24         | 22     |          | 23    |            | 25  | 22   | 20         |
| Thu | 26     | 23        |            | 21       | 25         | 23     |          | 24    |            | 26  | 23   | 21         |
| Fri | 27     | 24        |            | 22       | 26         | 24     |          | 25    |            | 27  | 24   | 22         |
| Sat | 28     | 25        |            | 23       | 27         | 25     |          | 26    |            | 28  | 25   | 23         |
| Sun | 29     | 26        |            | 24       | 28         | 26     |          | 27    |            | 29  | 26   | 24         |
| Mon | 30     | 27        |            | 25       | 29         | 27     |          | 28    |            | 30  | 27   | 25         |
| Tue | 31     | 28        |            | 26       | 30         | 28     |          | 29    |            | 31  | 28   | BOM        |
| Wed |        | 29        |            | 27       |            | 29     |          | 30    |            |     | 29   | 27         |
| Thu |        | 30        | F&GP       | 28       |            | 30     |          | 31    | BOM        | 28  | 30   | 28         |
| Fri |        |           |            | 29       |            | 31     |          |       |            | 29  |      | 29         |
| Sat |        |           |            | 30       |            |        |          |       |            | 30  |      | 30         |
| Sun |        |           |            | 31       |            |        |          |       |            |     |      | 31         |

College Closed

Chairs etc  
Audit  
Human Resources

Chairs, S&N + PR&R - Thursday 08.30 a.m.  
Tuesday @ 8.30 a.m.  
Thursday @ 8.30 a.m.

Learning, Teaching & Research  
Finance & General Purposes  
Joint Audit/F&GP  
Board of Management  
(including Briefing session)  
Board Away Day

Tuesday @ 4.30 p.m.  
Thursday @ 9.00 a.m. - October, March and June  
Tuesday 30 November @ 11.00 a.m.  
Tuesday 30 November @ 09.00 a.m.  
Thursday @ 4.30 p.m. February and March meetings  
Tuesday @ 4.30 p.m. October, December and June  
Full Day - Thursday 27th January 2021

## Board of Management

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>   | OSCR Return for 2019-20   |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]  | Lisa Ross, Board Secretary,   |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   | Board of Management   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>  | 01 April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>   | 25 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>  | To provide the Board of Management with the draft return to be submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) in respect of the College financial year 2019-20. |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]  | <b>Approval for this information to be submitted to OSCR.</b>   |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change | Compliance – OSCR regulations   |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>   | No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b>  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>   | Yes<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational:<br>Organisational: reputational risk if not submitted on time   |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | No  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  | N/A   |

## ITEM 05

|   |                  |  |  |
|---|------------------|--|--|
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]   | Non confidential |  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]  | Yes              |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                            |                  |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)  |                  | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                       |                  | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)   |                  | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |                  |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

## Section A

- i** **Charity Number**   
SC021197
- i** **Legal Name**   
Board Of Management Of Inverness College
- i** **1. Accounting Reference Date**   
31/07/2020
- i** **2. Gross Income**   
£28,096,849
- i** **3. Gross Expenditure**   
£30,146,030
- i** **4a. Does your charity publish its annual reports and accounts on its website?**  
Yes
- i** **4b. Copy & paste the link to your published accounts here**   
<https://www.inverness.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/inverness/about-us/board-of-management/2019-20-signed-accounts.pdf>
- i** **5. Your charity's purpose, according to the Scottish Charity Register is**   
The advancement of education; The advancement of health; The advancement of civic responsibility or community development; The advancement of arts, heritage, culture, or science; The advancement of public participation in sport.
- i** **6. In order to achieve this purpose, does your charity do any of the following?**  
Deliver services and / or hold meetings/sessions and / or undertake activities/events,  
Provide facilities
- i** **7. Does your charity receive income from investments (excluding bank interest but including income from stocks, shares, bonds etc.)?**  
No
- i** **8. Total Number Of Charity Trustees**  
16
- i** **9. Total Number Of Paid Staff**  
424
- i** **Does Your Charity Have Children And Or Vulnerable Adults As Beneficiaries**  
Yes
- i** **10.b If yes, can you confirm that your charity has appropriate policies in place to protect these vulnerable individuals?**  
Yes
- i** **10.c If you do not have appropriate policies, please explain how you plan to resolve this?**

## Section B

- i** **B.1 When did the charity trustees last look at and consider the content of the charity's governing document?**  
In the last 12 months
- i** **B.2 In the last financial year, did your charity operate with at least the minimum number of charity trustees required by your charity's governing document?**  
Yes

**i B.3 Does your charity have the following procedures in place? Please select all that apply.**

Trustees are provided with information about financial performance of the charity at least every 6 months,  
 Cheque books are kept in a secure place with access only by nominated persons,  
 More than one person authorises significant payments or expenditure,  
 Funds are banked without deduction of expenses,  
 Where the charity employs staff, statutory deductions (tax and NIC) are made from employees' wages and regularly paid to HMRC

**i B.4 Did any: (i) Charity trustee or (ii) Any Person or organisation connected to a charity trustee receive any payment or benefit from the charity in the last financial year?**

Yes

**i B.4 a) Names of all persons/organisations who received a benefit**

See related parties disclosure in Annual Accounts (pages 60-61)

**i B.4 b) The total money or benefit, paid or provided to them during the year**

34587

**i B.4 c) How many charity trustees received a payment or benefit or were connected to this person/organisation?**

6

**i B.5 Is your charity part of a group either as a parent or a subsidiary?**

No

**i B.5 a) If yes, please tell us if your charity prepares consolidated accounts as a parent organisation with a subsidiary or if your charity is included as a subsidiary in the consolidated accounts of another body.**

**i B.6 Did your charity receive 20% or more of its income from a person or organisation connected to a charity trustee in the last financial year?**

No

**i B.6 a) If yes, please explain what was received and where it came from.**

## Section C

**Please provide a breakdown of the charity's income for the last financial year using the following categories:**

**i C.1 Donations and legacies** 

0

**i C.2 Charitable Activities** 

28086958

**i C.3 Other Trading Activities** 

0

**i C.4 Investments** 

9891

**i C.5 Other** 

0

**i C.6 Total Income** 

28096849

**Please provide a breakdown of the charity's expenditure for the last financial year using the following categories:**

- C.7 Raising Funds**   
0
  - C.8 Charitable Activities**   
30146030
  - C.9 Other**   
0
  - C.10 Total expenditure**   
30146030
- 

- C.11 Please enter the charity's net current assets**  
4224917
- C.12 Please enter the charity's total funds**  
-9109119

## Board of Management

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>  | Development Plan 2021-22   |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]   | Lisa Ross, Board Secretary   |
| <b>Meeting:</b>  | Board of Management  |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>   | 01 April 2021  |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>  | 30 March 2021  |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>   | <p>Draft Development Plan 2021-22.</p> <p>This plan has been drafted with the recommendations from the External Effectiveness Review and the Review of the Code of Good Governance. The plan has been reviewed and is recommended for approval by the External Effectiveness Review Development Plan Sub Group on 30 March 2021.</p> |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]   | Approval   |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with::<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change | Compliance – Governance  |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>  | Yes / No<br>If yes, please specify:  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>  | Yes / No<br>If yes, please specify:<br>Operational:<br>Organisational: Potential governance failure if meetings not held.  |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>  | Yes/No<br>If yes, please specify:  |
| <b>Consultation:</b>   |  |

## Item 06

|   |                  |  |  |
|---|------------------|--|--|
| [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  |                  |  |  |
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]   | Non confidential |  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]  | Yes              |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                            |                  |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)  |                  | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                       |                  | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)   |                  | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |                  |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

## Introduction

The Code of Good Governance for Colleges in Scotland outlines the following requirement for Boards of Management.

The board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness at least every three years. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online.

We carried out our annual review of the Code of Good Governance via an online JISC survey. This survey was made available to all Board Members for completion during the period 17 December 2020 and 15 January 2021. We received a 43% response rate to the survey with 7 Board Members completing it.

Our External Effectiveness Review was carried out by Ron Hill, CDN throughout the period September 2020 to January 2021 with the final report being received on 29 January 2021.

## Board Development Plan

Following on from the results of the Review of the Code of Good Governance (appendix 1) and the External Effectiveness Review Report (appendix 2) a Board Sub Group was set up to review the recommendations and develop an action plan.

This plan is detailed below. A number of recommendations from the External Effectiveness Review have been subsumed into one recommendation and action and the plan will indicate where this has happened. Actions detailed within the plan will be built into Board activities, and approaches over the remainder of the year.

Recommendation 09 from the External Effectiveness Review was discussed at the HR Committee Meeting held on 11 March 2021. The Committee discussed the benefits of the formation of a new Committee Finance and Resources. However it was felt by all in attendance that the issue of HR required in-depth discussion and that the review of the Committees due to be carried out would alleviate any crossover items. It was therefore agreed that we would not combine the two Committees.

A further formal review of Code of Good Governance will be carried out in June 2021 and the Development Plan will be reviewed and updated as required. It is hoped that we will receive a higher response rate to this review.

## Approval

The Board of Management are asked to approve the Board Development Plan



**INVERNESS COLLEGE UHI – BOARD OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020-21**

|                         | RECOMMENDATION   | ACTION   | RESPONSIBLE PERSON  | TIMESCALE                               | UPDATES   |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>PRIORITY ACTIONS</b> |  |  |   |   |   |
| 1                       | <p>To develop, in conjunction with our strategy, a comprehensive business report for each Committee. This would allow for improved accountability for College performance and would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variances from agreed targets.</li> <li>• Management interventions where necessary.</li> <li>• Anticipated impact.</li> </ul> <p><i>(EER Recommendation 1)</i></p> | <p>Finalisation and approval of our 5 year strategic plan (including the addition of KPI's).</p> <p>Development of a new schedule of submissions for each Committee and a review of the Terms of Reference for each Committee this will include review of appropriate KPI's at each Committee Meeting.</p> | <p>Principal</p> <p>Board Secretary and Committee Chairs.</p> | <p>30 June 2021</p> <p>30 June 2021</p> | <p>The Principal has held consultative meetings with local MSP's, MPs and the Chamber of Commerce. Our strategy is being updated in order to take account of the feedback received from these meetings.</p> <p>High level KPI measures and strategy objectives have been drafted.</p>   |
| 2                       | <p>The development of a more influential, learner-focused Audit Committee through review of learner-facing systems and controls. Consideration of a wider membership for the Audit Committee to include additional Co-opted Members to achieve an independent and informed opinion.</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendations 2 &amp; 3)</i></p>  | <p>The Audit Committee will be reviewed during the annual Committee evaluation process. As part of this the Committee will discuss whether further additions to the Committee membership is required.</p>  | <p>Board Secretary &amp; Audit Chair</p>                      | <p>June 2021</p>                        | <p>In February 2021 we appointed a new Chair of the Audit Committee as well as a co-opted member to the Committee. The structure of the Committee was strengthened further by the addition of new board members to the Committee.</p> <p>As part of the new EMT structure the Director of Finance now has the Job Title Assistant Principal Finance &amp; Audit. This ensures a more influential role within the Committee.</p> |
| 3                       | <p>A review of the committee structure and committee performance to ensure each of the standing committees assists the governing board in the achievement of its responsibilities</p>  | <p>A review of each Committee will be carried out to ensure alignment with the new EMT Structure as part of this review we will develop a new schedule</p>   | <p>Board Secretary and Committee Chairs</p>                   | <p>June 2021</p>                        | <p>Following the restructure we will now have two members of the EMT as leads for each Committee.</p>   |

**Item 06**

|                      |  |   |  |           |   |
|----------------------|--|---|--|-----------|---|
|                      | (EER Recommendation 4)   | of submissions, review the Terms of Reference, and review how our agendas are structured to ensure that the relevant KPI's are considered.  |  |           |   |
| 4                    | <p>Development of college senior staff to achieve the production of succinct, analytical, accountable reports with clear recommendations to the governing board.</p> <p>Inclusion of 'learner and learning implications' and 'financial health' implications into our reporting format.</p> <p>(EER Recommendations 8 &amp; 9)</p> | <p>Following the completion of the restructure formal training will be arranged for all Managers on report writing.</p> <p>EMT members will be consulted on the development of schedule of submissions for each committee.</p> <p>Review of our report template and consideration of a standard template for each report along with consideration to expected length of each report.</p> <p>Development of Reading Rooms within AdminControl to allow for additional background information to be available to Board Members.</p> | <p>Principal</p> <p>Board Secretary &amp; Committee Chairs</p> <p>Board Secretary &amp; Committee Chairs.</p> <p>Board Secretary</p> | June 2021 | EMT restructure has now been completed. |
| <b>OTHER ACTIONS</b> |  |   |  |           |   |

## Item 06

|   |  |  |   |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| 5 | <p>Development of more and regular board creative time to support formal governing board decision making through the use of sessions to explore ways to address relevant educational and community development questions.</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendation 5)</i></p>     | <p>Review of how agenda's for each Committee are structure to allow for creative time to be built. Agendas to have sufficient time and space for EMT to share their thoughts with Board Members.</p> <p>Development of an annual programme to assist members to have meaningful time and dialogue with students.</p> | <p>Board Secretary &amp; Committee Chairs</p><br><p>Board Secretary</p> | <p>June 2021</p><br><p>August 2021</p> | <p>Board Members will be asked whether they would wish to participate and volunteer for the Community Garden.</p> |
| 6 | <p>To support the newly appointed Board Secretary and Chair of the Board of Management, to develop a programme (which may include a mentor) to assist the first year in office for them and for future role holders.</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendations 6 &amp; 7)</i></p> | <p>Mentoring programme to be developed.</p> <p>A programme of induction for both the Chair and the Board Secretary roles to be developed.</p>  | <p>Board Secretary</p><br><p>Board Secretary &amp; Chair of BOM.</p>    | <p>30 April 2021</p>                   | <p>The Board Secretary has a mentor in place and will develop an appropriate programme to follow.</p>             |
| 7 | <p>To develop strategic action plans for the following annual reports – Health &amp; Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendation 12)</i></p>  | <p>A review of how our strategic action plans are reported to be carried out as part of the development of our schedule of submissions</p>   | <p>Board Secretary, Committee Chairs &amp; EMT</p>                      | <p>June 2021</p>                       |   |

## Item 06

|    |  |   |   |                      |   |
|----|--|---|---|----------------------|---|
| 8  | <p>Review the working relationship between the college governing board and UHI to ensure clarity, engagement and contribution for the Inverness College governing board.</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendations 11 &amp; 13)</i></p>   | <p>Links will continue to be built with the Chair of Court and the Vice Chancellor, UHI. We will remain mindful of the clear boundaries between IC governing and UHI.</p> | <p>Principal &amp; Chair of Board of Management</p> | <p>Ongoing</p>       | <p>The Principal and the Chair of the Board of Management have met with the Vice Chancellor and the Principal will have a follow up meeting with him.</p>             |
| 9  | <p>Implementation of the plan to address aspects of the Code of Good Governance. It is suggested that a review of progress is undertaken every three months to check on progress and any issues arising from implementation.</p> <p><i>(EER Recommendation 14)</i></p> | <p>The annual review of the Code of Good Governance will be included within the schedule of submissions when developed.</p>   | <p>Board Secretary</p>                              |                      | <p>Development actions from the review of the Code of Good Governance will be addressed within this plan.</p>   |
| 10 | <p>All Board Members should be aware of the formal process for setting the Principal's remuneration.</p> <p><i>(Review of Code of Good Governance Recommendation)</i></p>  | <p>An updated guide to the process will be developed and circulated to all Board Members.</p>   | <p>Board Secretary</p>                              | <p>30 April 2021</p> | <p>The remuneration process in respect of the Principal's salary should be carried by the PR&amp;R Committee as some time has elapsed since it was last reviewed.</p> |

**Item 06**

|    |   |  |                 |               |   |
|----|---|--|-----------------|---------------|---|
| 11 | Development of the induction process to include online inductions.<br><br><i>(Review of Code of Good Governance Recommendation)</i> | Review of the induction process to take place. | Board Secretary | 30 April 2021 | The Board Secretary is currently carrying out a review of the induction process and papers. This has been delayed due to the cyber-incident |
|----|---|--|-----------------|---------------|---|

# Board of Management Evaluation - Code of Good Governance Review

Showing 7 of 7 responses

Showing **all** responses

Showing **all** questions

Response rate: 43%

- 1 The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges ("the Code") has been developed and is owned by the College Sector. The Code establishes standards of good governance for all Boards and provides the essential foundations for compliance within the legislation framework. The Code requires that Boards "have in place a robust self-evaluation process" which comprises of an annual internal review and an externally facilitated effectiveness review every 3 years. Following the Committees undertaking an evaluation process over Summer 2020 it is appropriate that the Board now undertakes it's internal review.

*No responses*

- 2 The format of this process comprises of an evaluation of the activities of the Board of Management by each Board Member individually, structured around the Code. Board Members are asked to express a level of agreement with a series of statements representing good governance and practice which will inform the self evaluation report. This will in turn indicate areas of strength and future development for the Board. The Code of Good Governance provides direction on the key principles of governance under the headings of: A. Leadership & Strategy B. Quality of Student Experience C. Accountability D. Effectiveness E. Relationships & Collaboration. The statements of good governance practice which comprise this evaluation are grouped under these headings and associated sub-headings and reflect the direction and guidance within the code. This ensures that the evaluation report will be closely aligned with the Code, and the development/improvement actions will be specific to the requirements of the Code. Neither responses nor comments provided will be attributed to any individual Board Member.

**Showing 1 response**

The board of management undertakes excellent leadership. Members are held accountable for any reports that they submit

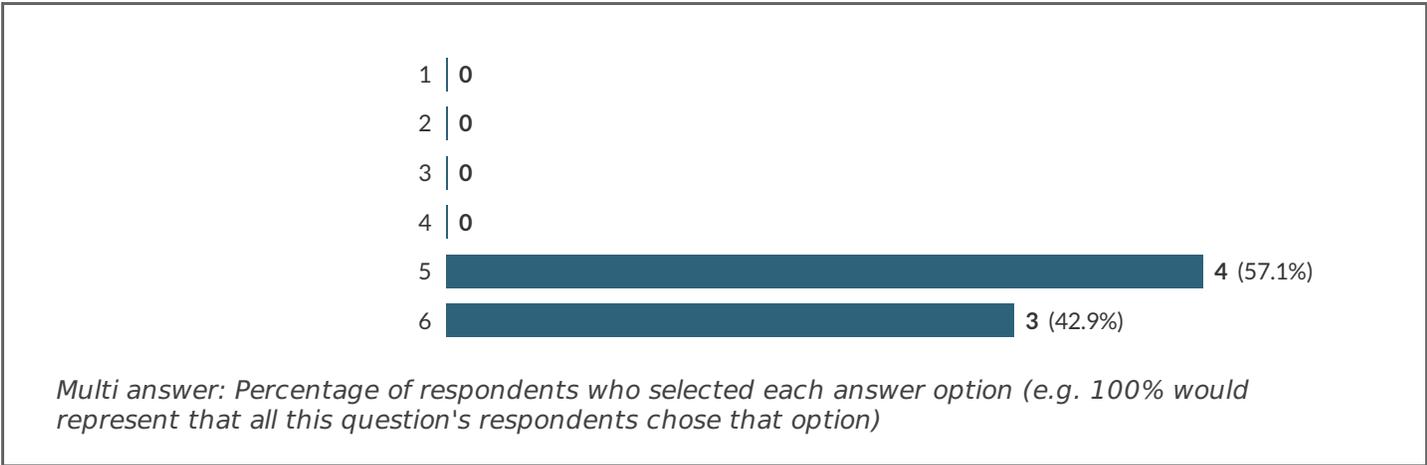
675451-675442-70549242

- 3 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

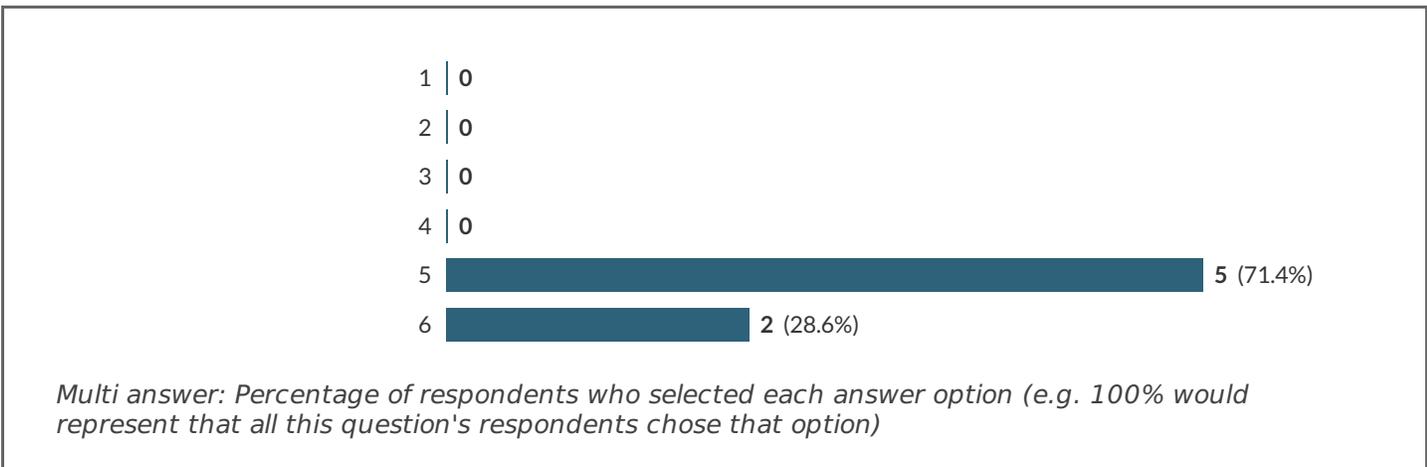
*No responses*

3.a Vision and Strategy

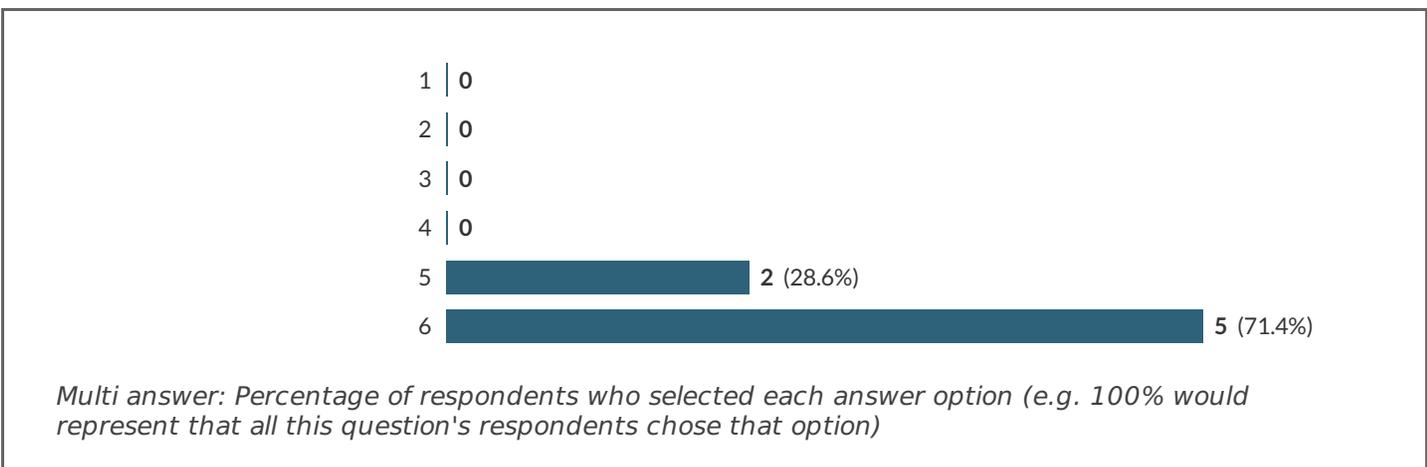
3.a.1 The Board has set out clear strategic priorities and aims.



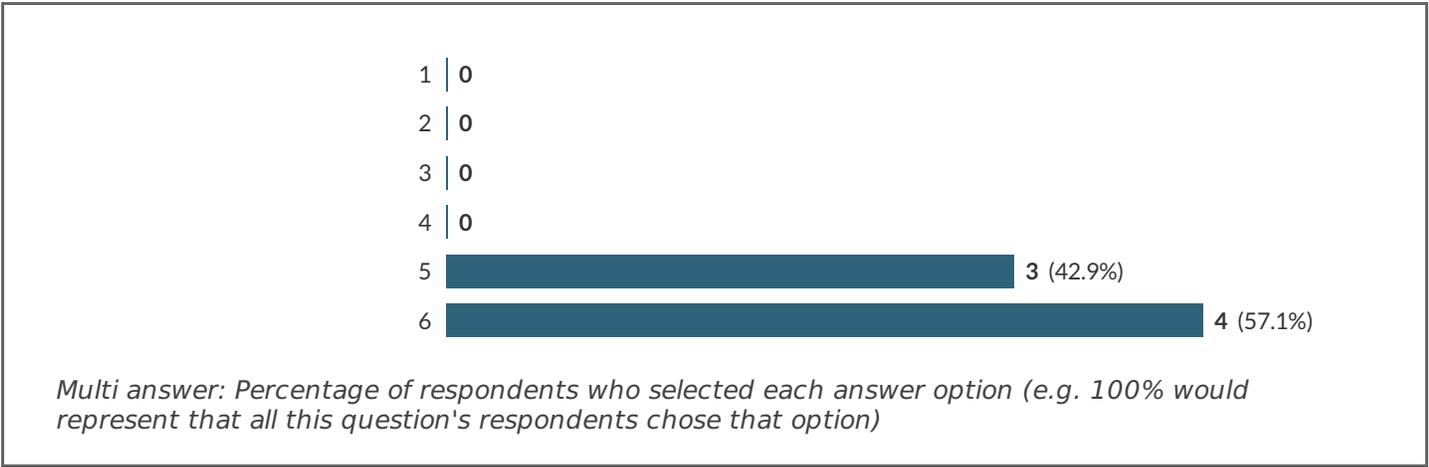
3.a.2 The Board regularly reviews performance against the strategic aims.



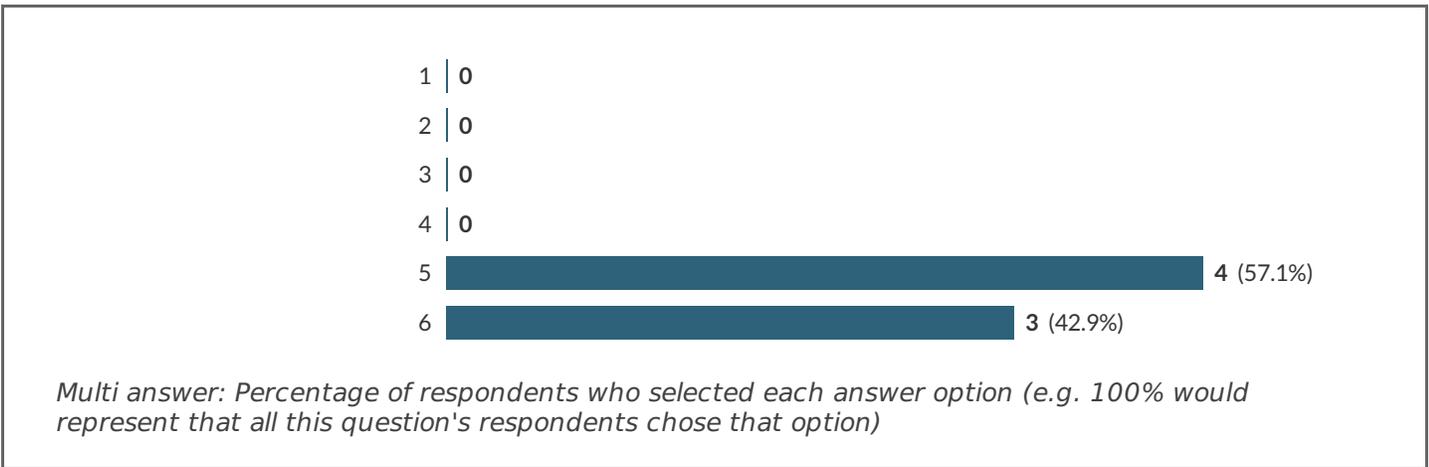
3.a.3 The Aims of the College are aligned with Regional Strategy/Outcomes



3.a.4 The Board undertakes regular Strategic Reviews/Scenario Planning



3.a.5 The Board ensures that there are comprehensive performance measures and/or systems in place.



3.a.i Evidence/Comments:

| Showing 1 response  |  |
|---|--|
| New strategic plan under discussion as previous one now expired | <a href="#">675451-675442-70415413</a> |

3.b Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

No responses

3.c Corporate Social Responsibility

3.c.1 The Board understands and demonstrates the College Values



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

**3.c.2** The Board has a Code of Conduct to which it is committed in practice



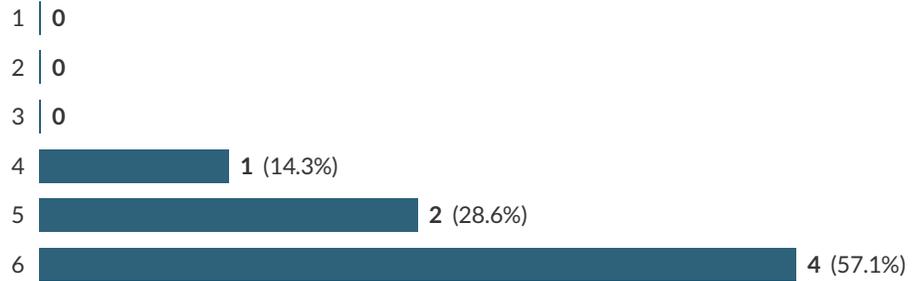
*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

**3.c.3** The Board operates according to the Principles of Public Life (Duty/Public Service, Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability and Stewardship, Openness, Honesty, Leadership and Respect)



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

**3.c.4** The Board membership reflects the make up of the local community



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

3.d Evidence/Comments

Showing 1 response

Meetings chaired very well and board members treat each other with respect

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4 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

Showing 1 response

5 675451-675442-70415413

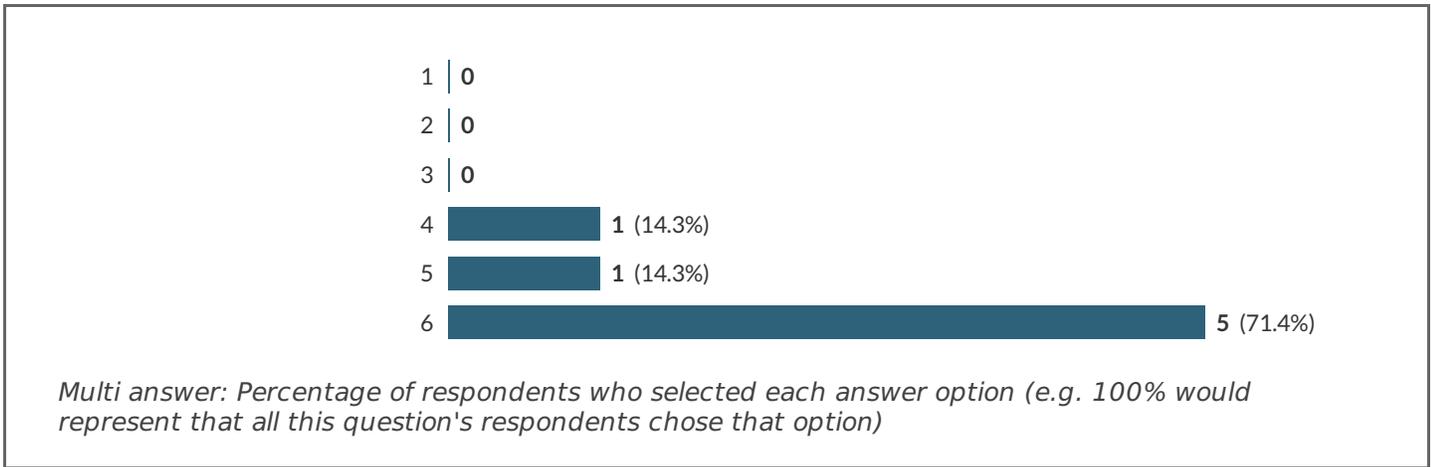
5 Student Engagement

5.1 Student Members are active at Board Level

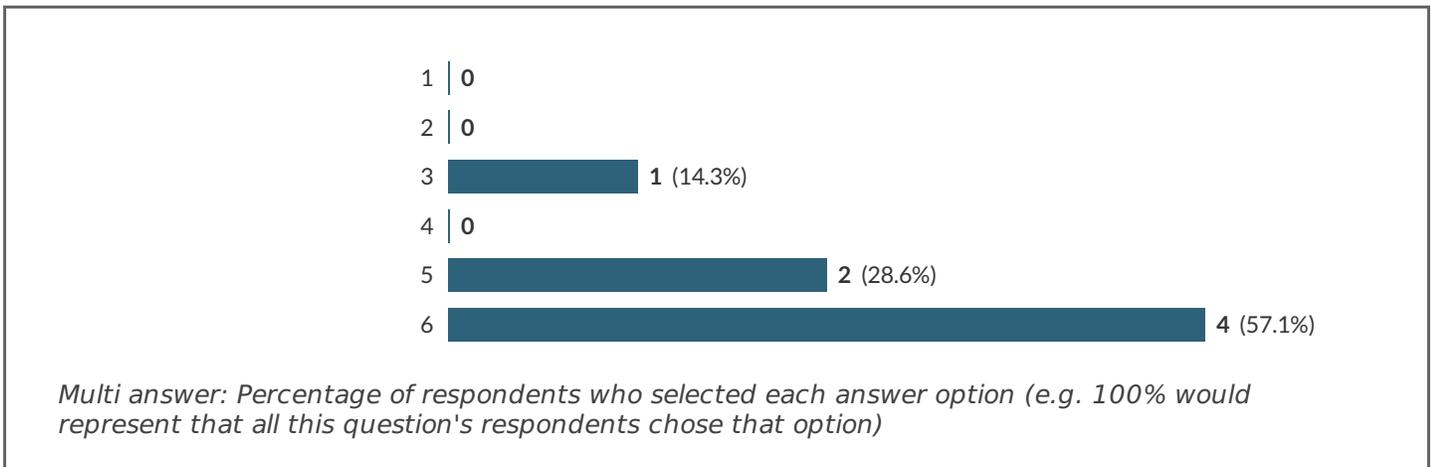


*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

5.2 The Board receives regular reports from the Student's Association



5.3 The Board and its Committees prioritise the opinions and views of students



5.a Evidence/Comments

| Showing 1 response  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Views of students are very important but not especially prioritised | 675451-675442-70415413 |

6 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

No responses

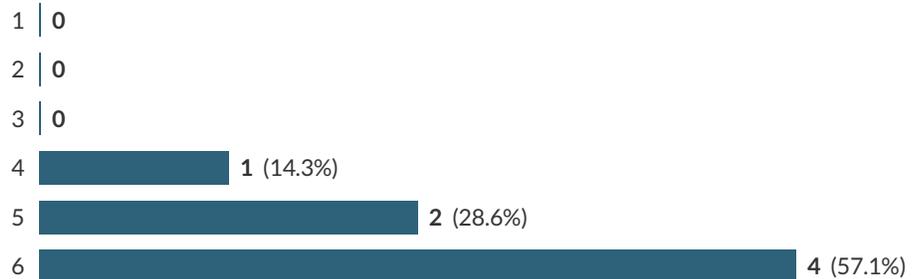
7 Learning and Teaching/Student Support

7.1 Learning and Teaching performance is overseen effectively



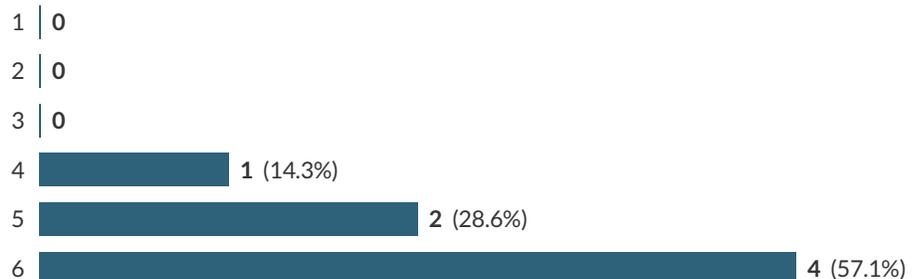
*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

7.2 The Board sets challenging student success targets



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

7.3 The student experience is central to Board decision making



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

8 Evidence/Comments

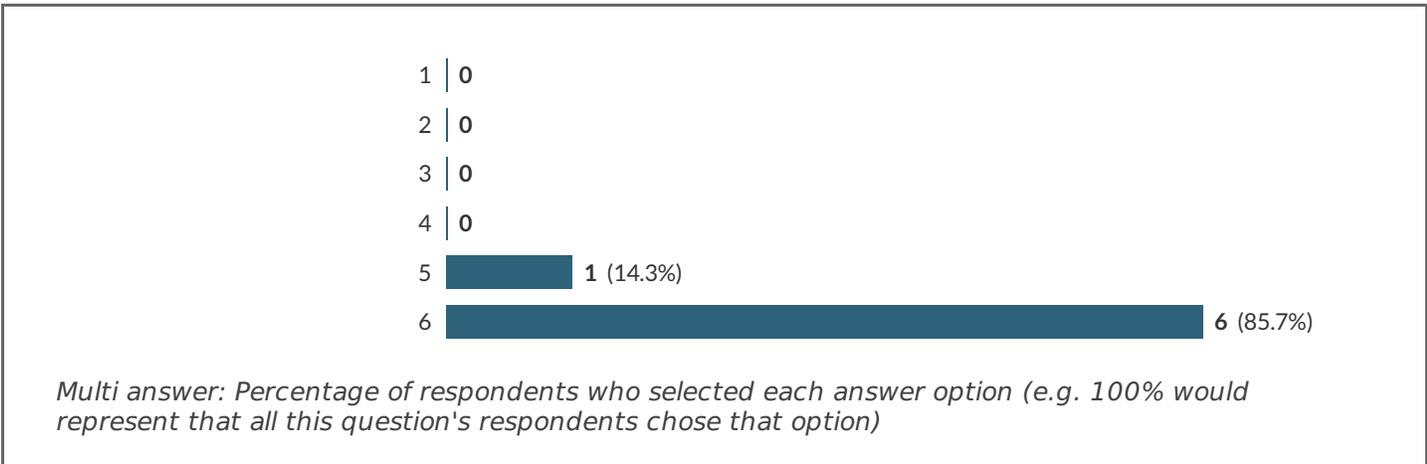
| Showing 1 response  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Regular reports to Board on performance and student experience of key importance in Board decisions | 675451-675442-70415413 |

9 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

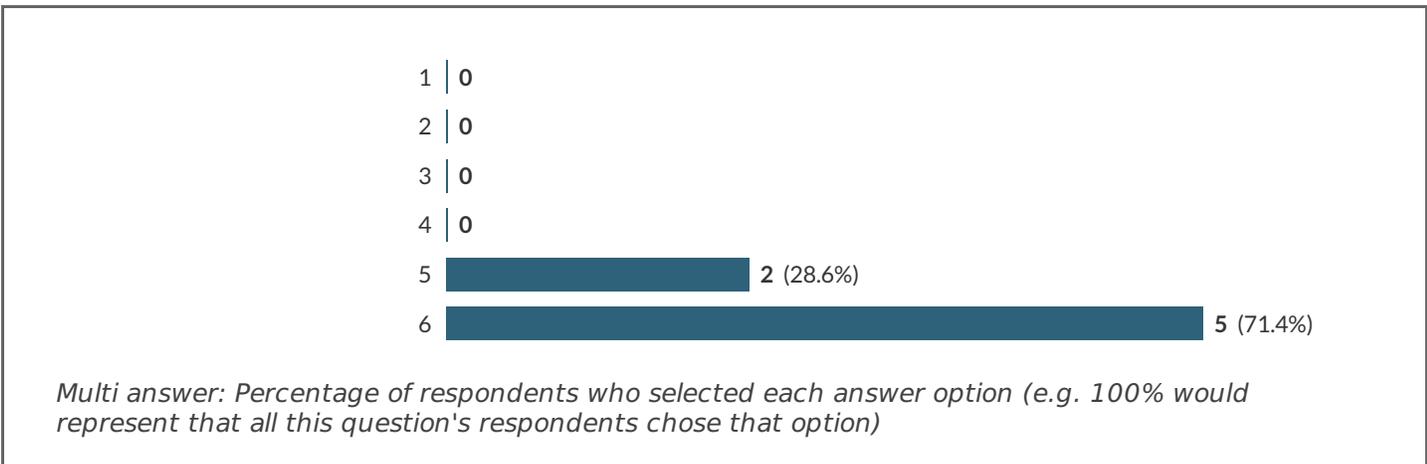
| Showing 1 response |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 5                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

10 Accountability and Delegation; Risk and Audit

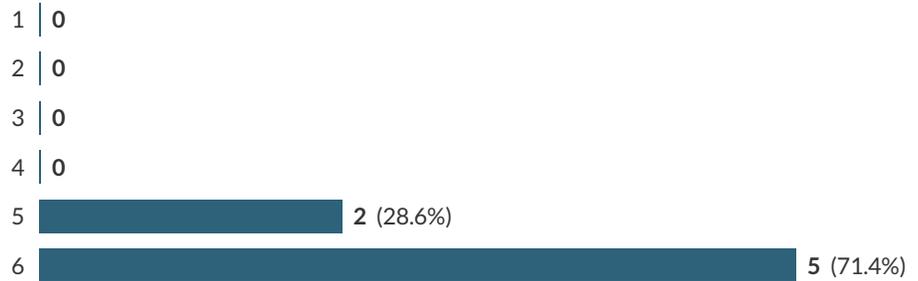
10.1 The Board recognises its chain of accountability



10.2 The Board is open in its decision making and facilitates disclosure



10.3 The Board delegates responsibilities to appropriate Committees



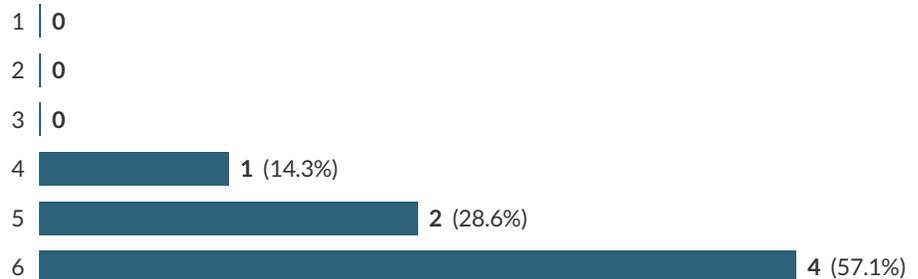
*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.4 The Board has in place an effective management strategy



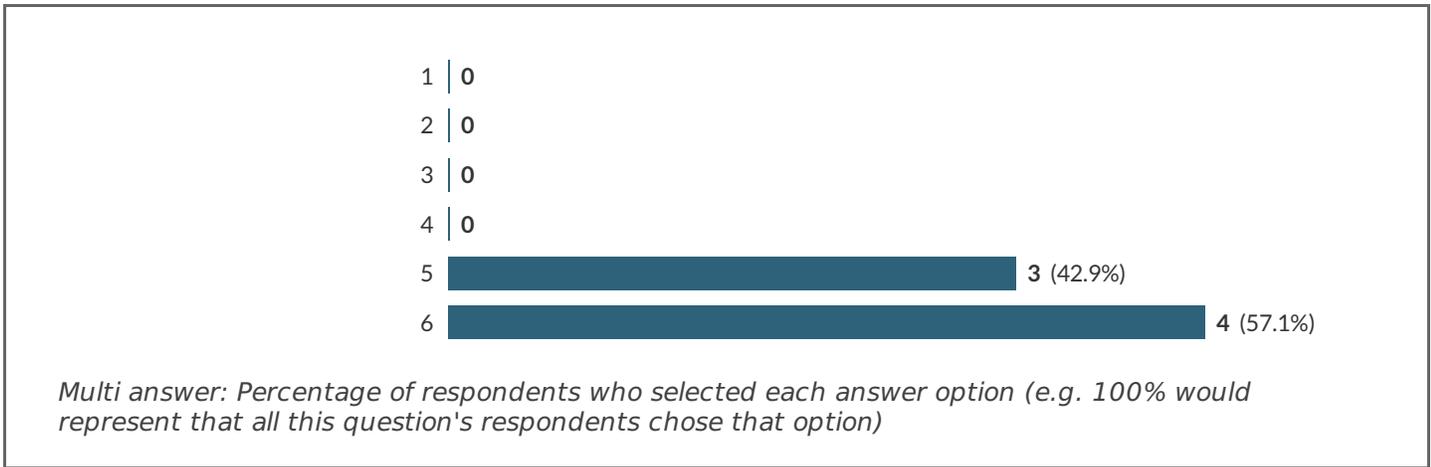
*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.5 The College's audit processes are comprehensive and rigorous



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.6 The Board publishes high quality Annual Reports



10.a Evidence/Comments

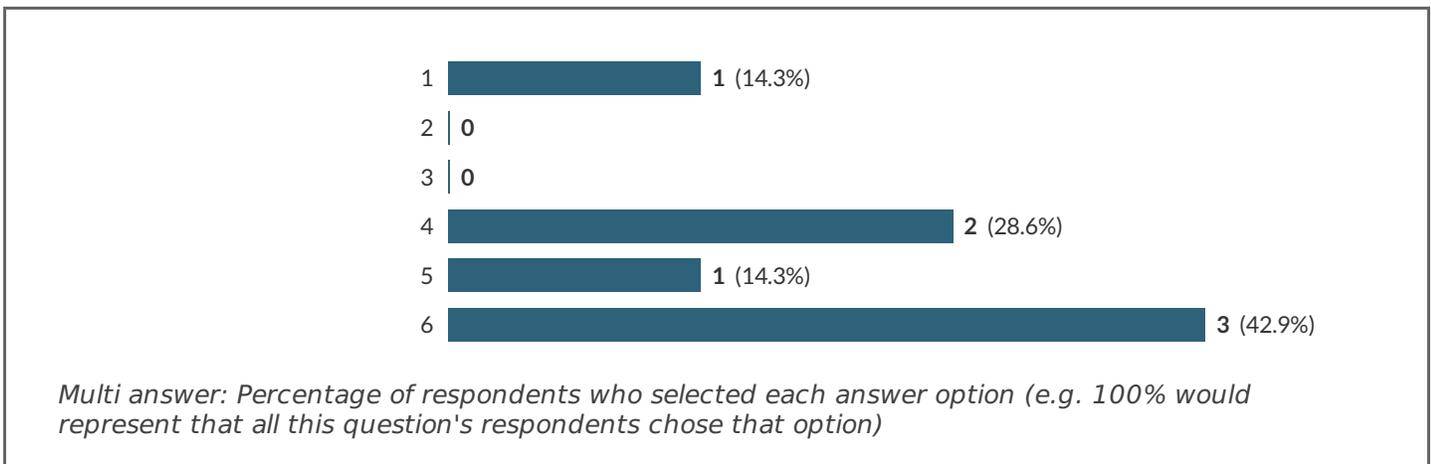
| Showing 1 response  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| All themes regularly reported on at Board level. Audit committee queries senior management team reports in detail | 675451-675442-70415413 |

10.b Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

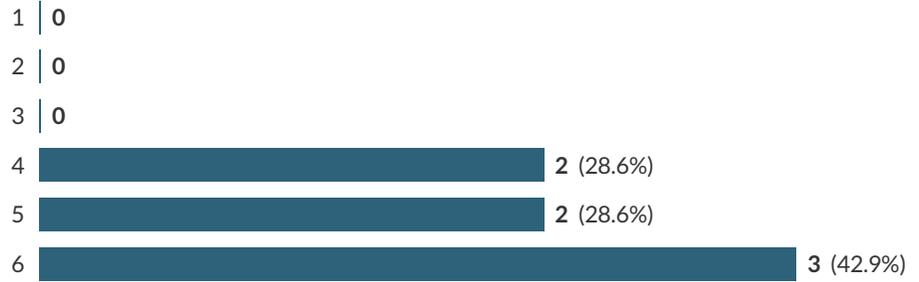
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| 5                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

10.c Rumeneration, Sustainability, Staff Governance

10.c.1 There is a formal process for setting the Principal's remuneration

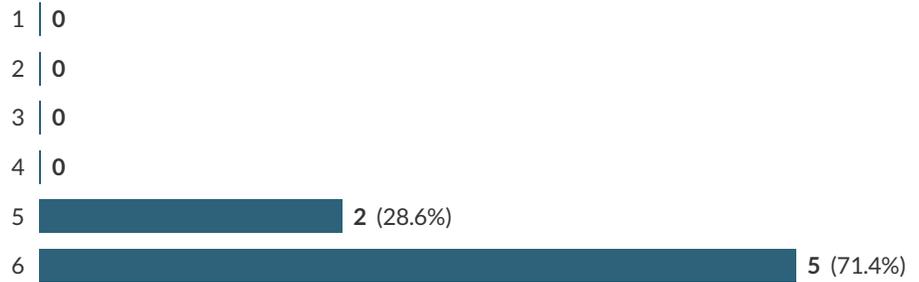


10.c.2 Funds are planned and used economically, efficiently and effectively



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.c.3 Board Members are aware of their responsibilities as Charity Trustees



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.c.4 The Board prioritises the fair and effective management of staff



*Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)*

10.c.i Evidence/Comments

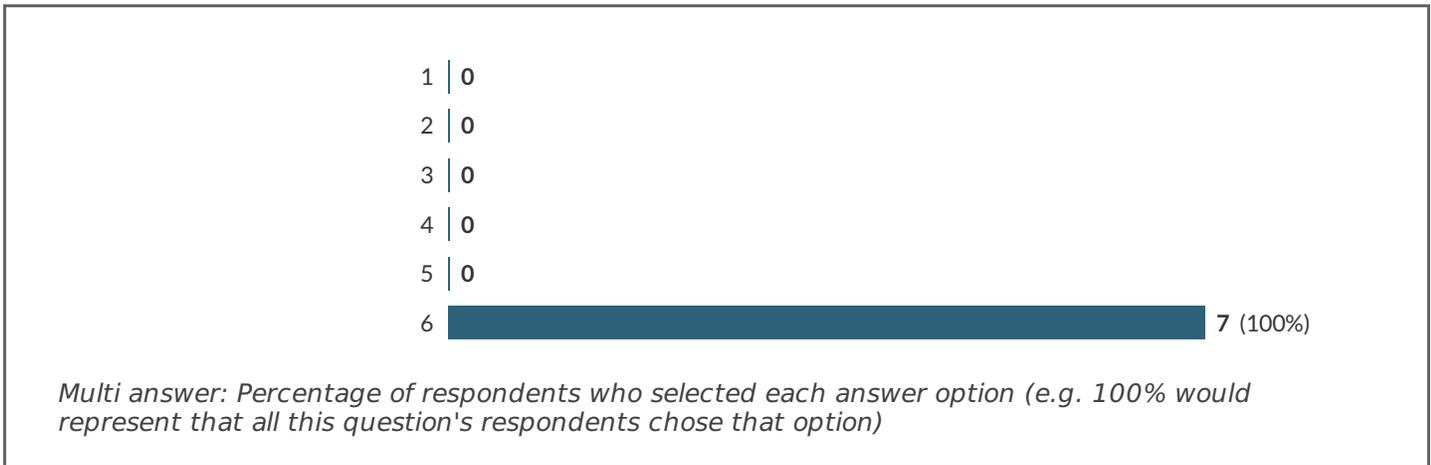
| Showing 1 response   |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| I'm not aware of process for setting principle's remuneration. | 675451-675442-70415413 |

11 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

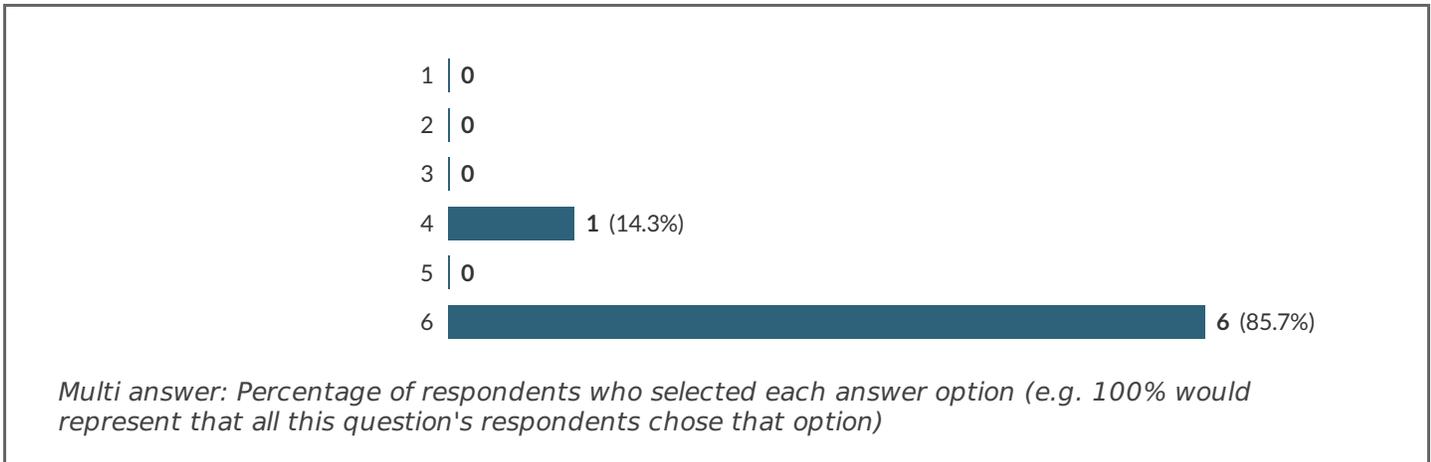
| Showing 1 response |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 5                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

12 Post Holder Effectiveness

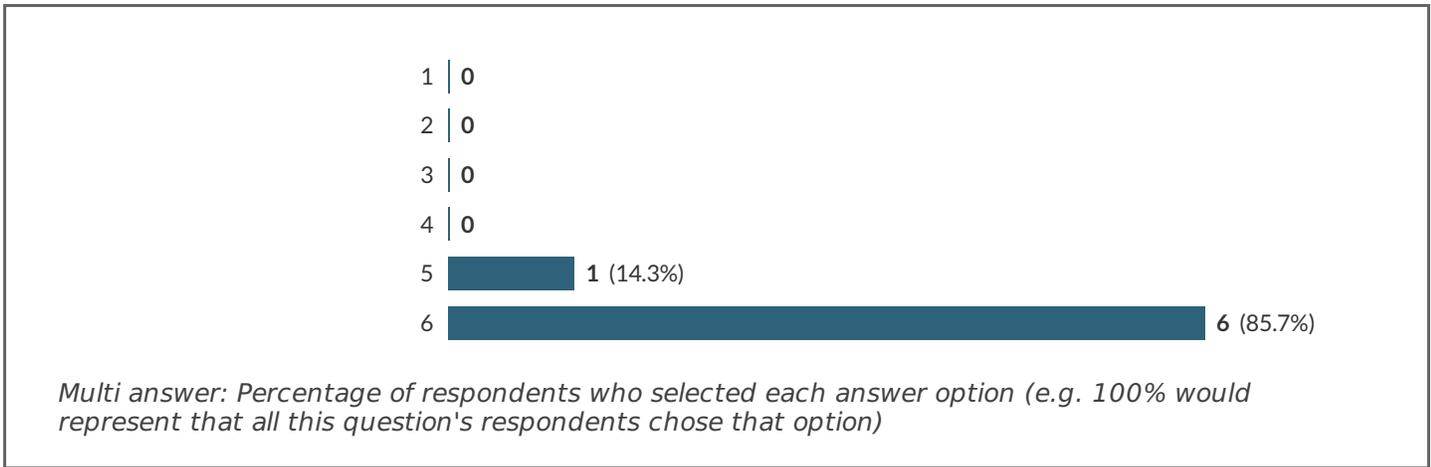
12.1 The Board Chair promotes open discussion on strategic matters



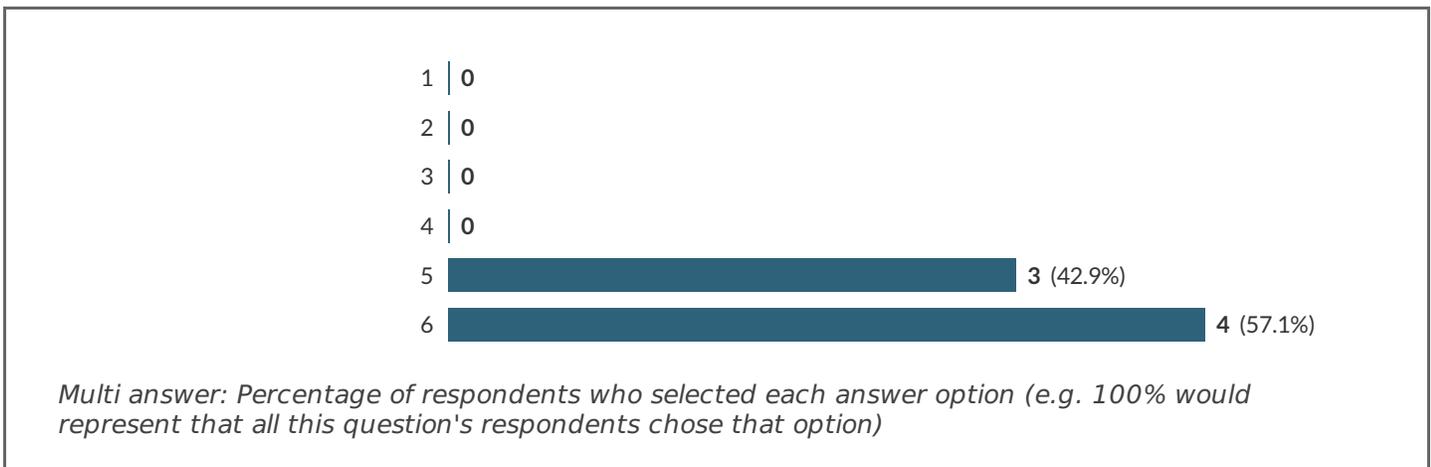
12.2 The Board has an appropriate mix of skills and works well as a team



12.3 The Principal and Executive Team are clearly accountable to the Board



12.4 The Board is well supported and guided in matters of governance



12.a Evidence/Comments

| Showing 1 response                                |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Need additional finance and accountancy expertise | 675451-675442-70415413 |

12.b Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

| Showing 1 response |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 5                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

12.c Board Member Development and Evaluation

12.c.1 Board recruitment is open and in line with ministerial guidance



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

12.c.2 There are sufficient opportunities for Board induction and development



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

12.c.3 Board effectiveness is regularly reviewed



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

12.c.i Evidence/Comments

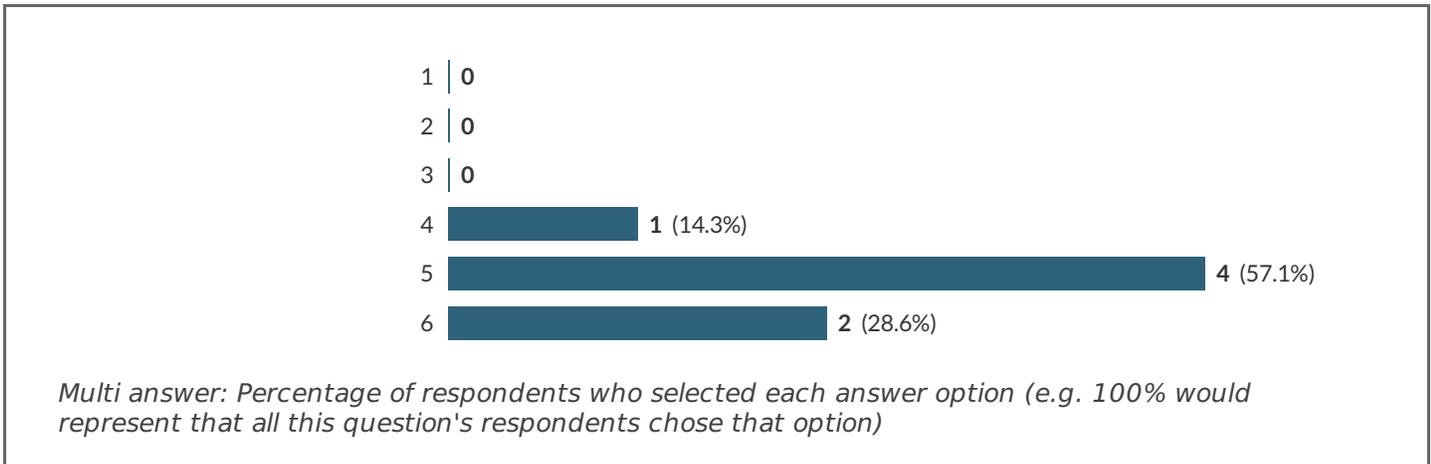
| Showing 1 response   |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Remote learning opportunities are very good. Induction could have been more structured | 675451-675442-70415413 |

13 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

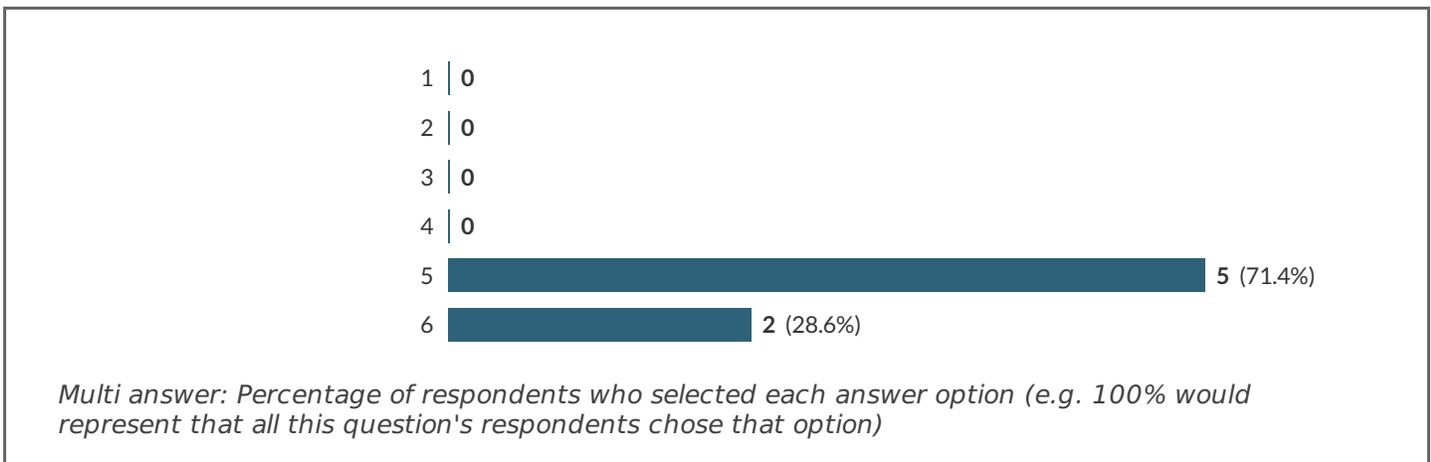
| Showing 1 response |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 6                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

13.a Partnership Working

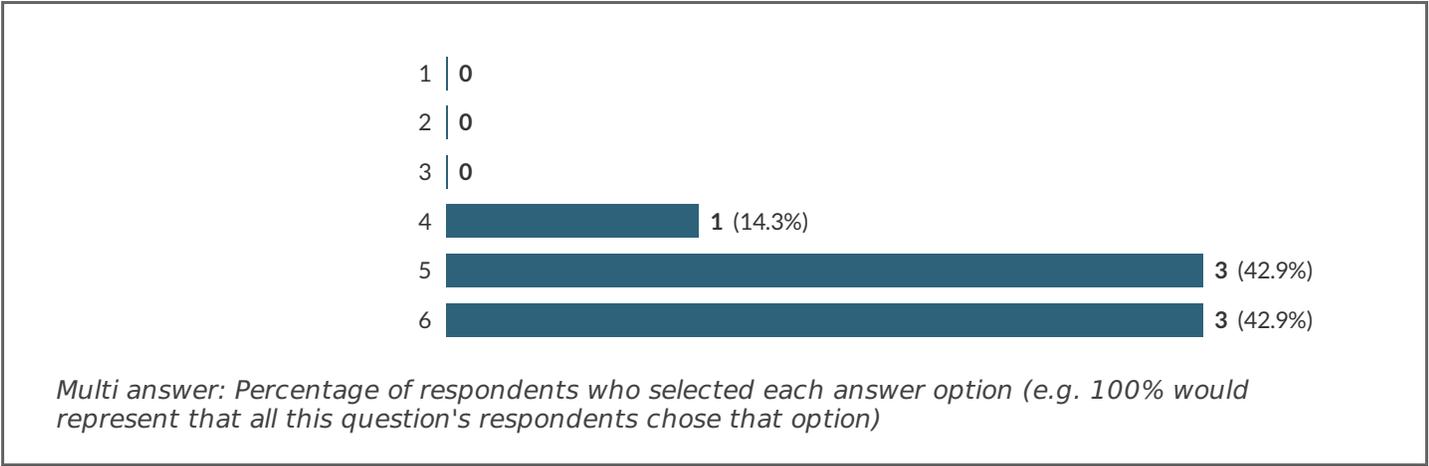
13.a.1 The Board ensures effective communication with stakeholders



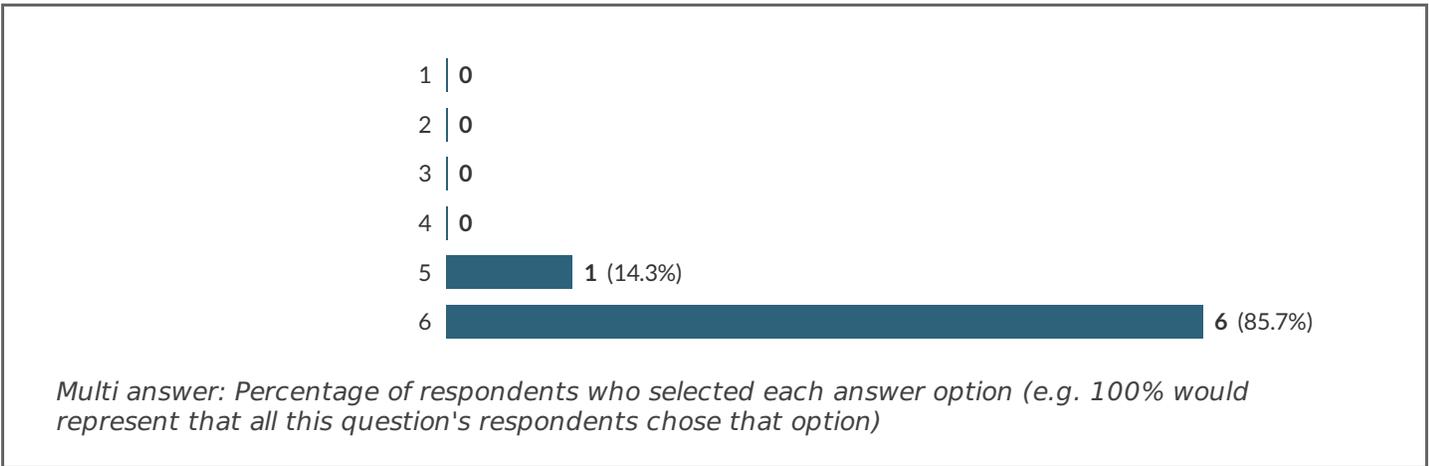
13.a.2 Learning provision is relevant to industry needs



13.a.3 The College engages well with stakeholders and/or industry partners



13.a.4 The Board supports the delivery of the Regional Outcome Agreement



13.b Evidence/Comments

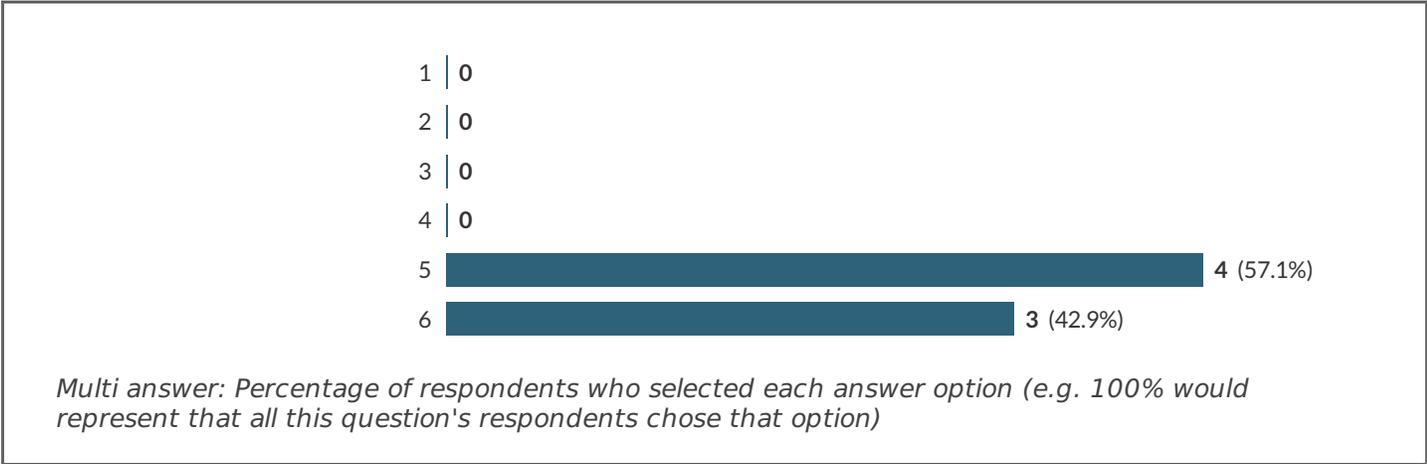
| Showing 1 response  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Curriculum review underway to ensure learning provision is what industry requires | 675451-675442-70415413 |

14 Rank from 1 to 6. (1 = Low/Disagree 6 = High/Agree)

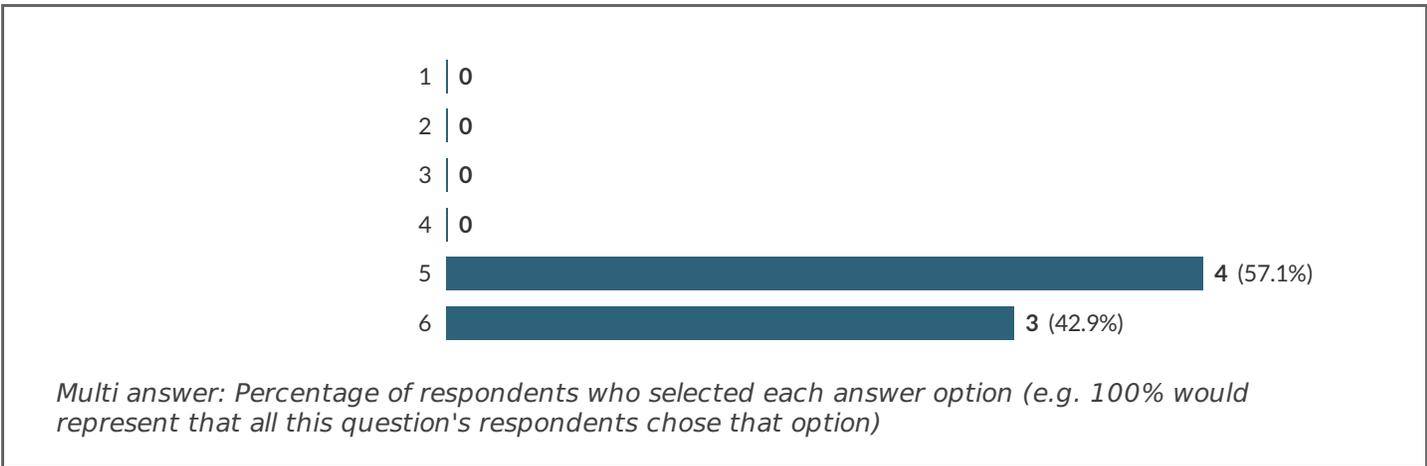
| Showing 1 response |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 5                  | 675451-675442-70415413 |

15 Openness and Transparency

15.1 The work of the Board and its Committees are communicated appropriately to all stakeholders



15.2 All Board agendas, papers and minutes are published within appropriate timeframes



15.a Evidence/Comments

| Showing 1 response  |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Some delay in publication of board papers due to COVID pandemic | 675451-675442-70415413 |

16 Token No

| Showing first 5 of 7 responses   |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 501cfd6325b84d61aa42129f9c4512b4 | 675451-675442-70208525 |
| 38d63af6ceee447fb996e46afbd1b3   | 675451-675442-70415413 |
| 0915d2a62dfe4e2480fafb8b28d3bf1e | 675451-675442-70434187 |
| 1a271016f0fe412b90d29965b59247f1 | 675451-675442-70453550 |
| 8d6ecb5a99bc49468087ddfcfc609ee9 | 675451-675442-70504731 |

# Inverness College

## Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review (Autumn 2020)

Final Report : 29 January 2021



Reviewer : Prof. Ron Hill  
[ron.hill@stir.ac.uk](mailto:ron.hill@stir.ac.uk)

W: [www.cdn.ac.uk](http://www.cdn.ac.uk)

## Name of College : Inverness College

### Externally Facilitated Effectiveness Review

#### Contents

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges, dated 2016, (the Code) sets out the principles of good governance for colleges in Scotland.
- 1.2 All colleges that receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council or a regional strategic body must comply with the Code as a condition of grant. Each governing board must state its adoption of the Code in its corporate governance statement contained within its annual financial statement.
- 1.3 The five principles set out in the Code provide a framework within which colleges are expected to develop their own policies and procedures.
- 1.4 The Code states that the college governing board must have in place a robust self-evaluation process. Para D. 23 states '*The Board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness at least every three years*'. This externally facilitated governance review was established to meet this expectation.
- 1.5 'The Guide for Board Members in the College Sector' and the 'Board Development Framework' provide additional guidance for college board members and college board secretaries.

### 2. Methodology

- 2.1 The effectiveness review included various approaches aimed at building up an overview of the governing board's effectiveness. The components of the review process were
  - Initial meeting with the Chair, Principal and Board Secretary to agree the scope of the review and the overall project plan (8 September 2020)
  - Observation<sup>1</sup> of Board meeting (6 October 2020) and Audit Committee (15 September 2020)

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that at the time of Covid-19 pandemic, governing board and committee meetings were taking place 'on-line'. Thus, reference to the observation of meetings should be understood as observation of

- Desk review of core governance documentation, including agendas and reports and minutes.
- Interviews with the Chair, Principal, Board Secretary, Vice Chair/Senior Independent Member, Student Governors, Staff Governor (12, 21,23 October 2020)
- Board survey to seek Members' views of governing processes (completed 5 Nov 2020)
- On-line event to test review conclusions and recommendations (28 January 2021)

### 3. Executive Summary

3.1 The governing board is successfully moving through a period of challenge (strategic direction and financial health) and change in board membership (6/16 new governors within the last 12 months) together with a new Board chair and a new governance professional, both starting in 2020. A new Chair of the Audit Committee is to be appointed. The Board has recently successfully addressed a Financial Recovery Plan and is now developing a strategy for the next three years.

3.2 As it is relevant to the context for this review,

- (i) the Inverness College Chair is newly in office (Jan 2020) and the Inverness College Board Secretary is also newly in post (April 2020). Given the consequences of Covid-19, this has been a particularly difficult period to begin positions of responsibility for the governing of Inverness College;
- (ii) A new Chair of the Audit Committee is currently being recruited;
- (iii) There is new leadership for the University of the Highlands and Islands which, given its strategic and funding role for Inverness College, has consequences for the confidence and clarity of the governing board of Inverness College

3.3 The governing of Inverness College is generally of a good standard.

3.4 The effectiveness review has highlighted several areas where improvements would enable more effective decision making in the achievement of the governing board's responsibilities. In summary these improvements are as follows:-

- The achievement of a strategic business report which supports the implementation of the board's strategic objectives
- The achievement of a more influential, learner-focused Audit and Risk Committee
- A review of the committee structure and committee performance to ensure each of the standing committees assist the governing board in the achievement of its responsibilities;
- Development of more board creative time to support formal governing board decision making
- Development of college senior staff to achieve the production of succinct, analytical, accountable written reports with clear recommendations to the governing board

on-line meetings. Such meetings are obviously different from the dynamic of face-to-face governing meetings. However, given the circumstances, it is the effectiveness of on-line governing which is being commented on in this review.

- Ensure the reporting format includes 'learner and learning implications' and 'financial health implications'
- Development of better focused governing agendas addressing the implementation of the college's strategic and operational objectives in relation to targets, timescales, strategic expectations.
- Ensure strategic management accounts are presented, with analytic commentary, to every governing board meeting
- Embedding an annual review of compliance with the principles of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges

## 4. Effectiveness Review against the Code for Good Governance in Scotland's Colleges

### 4.1 Leadership and Strategy

- 4.1.1 This review has taken place at a time for transition for Inverness College having completed the previous strategic planning period 2017/2020. The previous plan established a clear framework for the direction of the college. Performance indicators were established and published on the college website for 2017/18 & 2018/19.
- 4.1.2 The governing board is now considering the strategic direction for the coming three years. This process should be complete by Spring 2021, following consultation with communities and stakeholders. The board has established a process and a timetable for this fundamental task.
- 4.1.3 The development of strategy by the governing board should be accompanied by appropriate reporting to the board presenting progress and any variance from intended outcomes. 'Workstream progress' should be replaced by a comprehensive business report (including financial health) which identifies strategic objectives, target performance and timescale, actual performance, variance, impact to date, management intervention options (if required). Consideration of improved reporting could take place alongside the strategic planning exercise.
- 4.1.4 Mix of board membership appears to be relevant and balanced from the governor skills matrix. However, the detailed profile was only available for 10 of the 16 board members. A further four board members are currently being recruited with skills priority of audit, legal, further & higher education, finance, risk management.

### 4.2 Quality of the Learner Experience

- 4.2.1 From board meeting observation, interviews and questionnaire responses, the quality of the student experience is central to the operation of the governing board.
- 4.2.2 The governing board has established a Learning, Teaching and Research Committee. Responses from the governance questionnaire include *'the executive report on the progress and success of the students and the feedback we have*

*from the national benchmarks is that we are amongst the highest performing colleges in the sector’.*

- 4.2.3 The student voice, as demonstrated by the contribution to the board meeting, is well-presented and received. The board receives a written report from Inverness College Students’ Association Report (e.g. 6 October 2020) which is comprehensive and very informative. Like all reports to the college governing board, the report would benefit from ‘impact’ i.e. going beyond description.
- 4.2.4 Reporting to the governing board and committees can be lengthy and inconsistent in style. Consideration should be given to including a mandatory section ‘learner and learning implications’ to assist board members. A board member has suggested in response to the governance questionnaire that a ‘student impact’ section be included with college policies.
- 4.2.5 The governing board benefits from the contribution of its two student members and two staff members.

### 4.3 Accountability

- 4.3.1 The governing board has established the following committees to provide scrutiny and specialist consideration
  - Audit
  - Finance and General Purposes
  - Human Resources
  - Learning, Teaching and Research
  - Chairs Committee (Remuneration, Search)
  - New Campus Project Board
  - Longman Disposal Board
- 4.3.2 In general board and committee meetings (from evidence provided, observation and interview) are well-organised, purposeful and achieve some impact. Responses to the governance questionnaire<sup>2</sup> and interviews suggest a review of committee arrangements and contribution to the achievement of board responsibilities would be welcomed. Consideration could be given to the formation of a Finance and Resources Committee (combining Finance and General Purposes Committee and Human Resources Committee). ‘Resources’ should be considered as ‘resources for learning’.
- 4.3.3 There are mixed views from respondents to the governance questionnaire regarding the quality of reporting to the governing board. The range includes ‘the excellent quality of reports’ and also ‘too lengthy and wordy and recommendations can be woolly at times’. It is the opinion of the reviewer that the reports are generally too wordy and descriptive. Reports could be improved by more analysis, clearer messages and specific recommendations.
- 4.3.4 There is scope for further contribution by the governing board / committee by refinements to senior staff reports as follows:-
  - Revising the business report (see 4.1.3.)

<sup>2</sup> 8 responses were received to the governance questionnaire – a 47% response rate.

- Improve report recommendations – from approve/note to a clearer connection with the subject of the report
  - Evolve report content from largely positive news to an actual account with professional insight
  - Restrict senior staff talking through reports and thus using up governing board member time for discussion
  - Every effort should be taken to achieve higher quality / low density reporting.
- 4.3.5 It would be beneficial to conclude meetings with a reflection on the impact of the meeting for students and for staff. Notes of these reflections could be recorded in brief on the minutes of the meeting.
- 4.3.6 The governance section of the college website is mostly current, well-presented and informative. Perhaps a higher profile could be given to encouraging interest in becoming a new college governor, including the positive aspects of serving as a college governor.
- 4.3.7 Accepting a change in board secretary during 2020, the minutes of board and committee meetings could be improved by the coding of decisions for future reference. Decisions should be recorded in a way which explains what has been approved, or declined, or supported, or noted, plus effective date where relevant.

#### 4.4 Board Effectiveness

- 4.4.1 This is an aspiring governing board which achieves impact through technical knowledge support, community understanding, ambition, pace, governing culture, and its procedural decision making.
- 4.4.2 Board members appreciate 'collective responsibility' in decision making. Board members provide constructive challenge and support at governance meetings, holding the senior college staff to account.
- 4.4.3 The board has addressed recent financial difficulties through the achievement of a Financial Recovery Plan. This is a considerable achievement and has lifted the confidence of the governing board. A governance questionnaire respondent stated '*financial recovery has given us a great deal of information on our position*'.
- 4.4.4 Observation of the Audit Committee suggested that one or two Co-opted External Members could add insight and rigour to the committee's deliberations.
- 4.4.5 Equality and diversity, Safeguarding and Health & Safety annual reports would benefit from a strategic action plan with expected outcomes, timescales and monitoring arrangements.
- 4.4.6 Governor development records for 2019/20 show a very limited pattern of activity, principally mandatory training for GDPR. One governor has completed induction. A strategic away was held in January 2020. There is currently no governor development programme for 2020/21 at the time of writing (November 2020).
- 4.4.7 Current member induction arrangements appear based on a deficit model. A review of the member induction programme towards a more developmental

model should assist new members with a better understanding of their role and an understanding of Inverness College for students, staff and stakeholders. The induction programme should address induction knowledge, activities and outcomes for the first nine months of board membership.

- 4.4.8 A review of compliance with the principles of the Code of Good Governance undertaken by Members in December 2020 identified a number of areas where improvements to governing practice could be achieved. In future years, it is hoped that full board participation in reviewing compliance with the Code can be arranged. Members could consider the development of stretch targets for aspects of the Code to move beyond basic compliance.

#### 4.5 Relationships and Collaboration

- 4.5.1 The relationship between Inverness College with the University of the Highlands and Islands may benefit from a joint IC/UHI review to ensure clarity of purpose and effectiveness of operation for Inverness College. Through interview, observation and some responses to the governance questionnaire there is an expressed desire to understand and address the relationship between UHI and Inverness College. Central to developing board members' appreciation of the relationship between Inverness College and UHI is improved communication (a) from UHI to Inverness College board and (b) better sharing of UHI strategy and operational performance within Inverness College at board level.
- 4.5.2 The examples of external contacts and engagement by senior college staff appears organised, relevant and appropriate. The pattern and impact of stakeholder relationships could be reviewed on a regular basis by stakeholder mapping as a development exercise with the governing board to ensure senior staff time and energy is spent in the most effective ways in relation to accountabilities and strategic intentions.

### 5. Recommendations

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | Most recommendations are 'desirable'. However, the recommended revision to the business report should be given high priority.  |
| 1 | To accompany the development of the next strategic plan, to develop a comprehensive business report, for each board meeting, with improved accountability for college performance to date and including variances from agreed targets, management interventions where necessary, and anticipated impact. |
| 2 | The development of a more influential, learner-focused Audit Committee through review of learner-facing systems and controls   |
| 3 | Consideration of a wider membership for the Audit Committee to include a Co-opted External Member (or two) to achieve an independent and informed opinion.   |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 4  | A review of the committee structure and committee performance to ensure each of the standing committees assists the governing board in the achievement of its responsibilities  |
| 5  | Development of more and regular board creative time to support formal governing board decision making through the use of sessions to explore ways to address relevant educational and community development questions                         |
| 6  | To support the newly appointed Board Secretary, develop a programme (which may include a mentor) to assist the first year in office.  |
| 7  | To support the newly appointed Chair of the Governing Board, develop a programme (which may include a mentor or mentors) to assist the achievement of the role.   |
| 8  | Development of college senior staff to achieve the production of succinct, analytical, accountable reports with clear recommendations to the governing board  |
| 9  | Ensure the reporting format includes 'learner and learning implications' and 'financial health implications'  |
| 10 | Seek to improve the clarity of the relationship with UHI through a review process. This process should prioritise the removal of uncertainty and lack of clarity between UHI and IC and search for ways to achieve a productive relationship. |
| 11 | Consideration could be given to the formation of a new committee 'Finance and Resources'<br>(to combine Finance and General Purposes Committee & Human Resources Committee)   |
| 12 | To develop strategic action plans for the following annual reports – Health & Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding  |
| 13 | Review the working relationship between the college governing board and UHI to ensure clarity, engagement and contribution for the Inverness College governing board.   |
| 14 | Implementation of the plan to address aspects of the Code of Good Governance. It is suggested that a review of progress is undertaken every three months to check on progress and any issues arising from implementation.                     |

## Annex 1 Document Review

Annual Audit Committee report to the Board of Management 2018-19

Board of Management Agenda and Papers – 6 October 2020

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2019/20  
Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20  
Health and Safety Annual Report 2019/20  
Strategic Plan 2020-25 – indicative planning timeline  
2020-2025 - Draft Strategic Aims  
Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/20  
Student Engagement Strategy 2017/20  
Access and Inclusion Strategy 2017/20  
Board of Management Induction Handbook 2019  
Board of Management Induction Checklist 2018  
UHI Academic Partner Board Members' Information Pack  
Board members skills profile 2020  
Board member profiles 2020  
Board member training record 2019/20  
Board of Management Committee Membership - August 2020  
Review of Code of Good Governance (January 2021)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>  | Extension of BDO contract   |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]   | Lisa Ross, Board Secretary  |
| <b>Meeting:</b>  | Board of Management   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>   | 01 April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>  | 25 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>   | The paper provides information on the extension of the BDO contract which was approved by the Audit Committee on 09 March 2021. |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]   | Approval  |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with::<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change | Compliance / Risk Management  |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>  | None  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>  | Yes / No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational: None<br>Organisational: None   |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>  | No  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail   |   |
| <b>Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]</b>  | Confidential  |

## ITEM 07

|  |    |  |  |
|--|----|--|--|
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]   | No |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.                               |    |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)   |    | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                          |    | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)  |    | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld?<br>(express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |    |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>   | Review of Shared Finance Service  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]  | Roderick M Ferrier, Director of Finance (Shared)  |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   | Board of Management   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>  | 1 April 2021  |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>   | 24 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>  | To provide information on the progress of the shared finance service between Inverness College and North Highland College   |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]  | Consideration and discussion  |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with::<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compliance</li> <li>• partnership services</li> <li>• risk management</li> <li>• strategic plan</li> <li>• new opportunity/change</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>   | Yes<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b> Must ensure funds are fully utilised in year and on budget.   |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>   | Yes<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational: to support the institution in the delivery of its operational objectives.<br>Organisational: if funds not utilised or overspend could lead to reduction in future years allocations |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b>  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  |   |

## Item 08

|   |              |  |  |
|---|--------------|--|--|
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]   | Confidential |  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]  | No           |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                            |              |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)  |              | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                       | x            | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)   |              | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |              |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp> and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

**Board of Management**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>  | COVID-19 and Planning for 2021/22  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]   | Professor Chris O’Neil,<br>Principal   |
| <b>Meeting:</b>  | Board of Management  |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>  | 24 March 2021  |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>   | This paper has been produced to provide an update on COVID-19 infrastructure related activity since the December Board of Management Meeting and to explore some of the pertinent factors and knock-on impacts affecting planning for AY 21/22 |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]   | Discussion   |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with::<br>1) compliance<br>• partnership services<br>• risk management<br>• strategic plan<br>• new opportunity/change | Key areas are compliance with Government advice and risk management<br><br>To embed or reflect our values and commitments in all our work and through our processes, procedures and arrangements   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Resource implications:</b>  | <b>Yes / No</b><br><b>If yes, please specify:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) additional expenditure on alcohol-based hand gels and wipes as well as additional PPE</li> <li>2) potential expenditure on deep cleaning of any affected areas</li> <li>3) additional costs of delivering classes due to conformance with 2-metre physical distancing</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>  | <b>Yes / No</b><br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational: potential further physical closure of College to prevent spread of virus; impact will depend on timing and duration of any closure along with progress made with delivering practical work<br>Organisational: Stress on staff to continue to deliver in prolonged exceptional circumstances<br>Reputational: failure to comply with SG guidance and our own protocols  |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>  | <b>Yes/No</b><br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Some learners may be more affected than others and we have taken every step we can within existing resources to address issues such as digital poverty  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail | Unions: EIS FELA, UNITE and GMB all actively involved in COVID-19 Transition Management Team.<br>HISA are also represented on the team.<br>Regular engagement with UHI Crisis Management Group (2x weekly), Extended Health and Safety Practitioner’s Forum (weekly)<br>SFC, Colleges Scotland, Richard Lochhead, Universities Scotland, College Development Network etc regularly provide input and seek responses on specific issues. Directors of Curriculum, Student Experience, External Relations and Research and Innovation. Curriculum teams (largely Heads and Deputes). |
| <b>Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]</b>  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]   |  |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.   |  |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)   |  | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)  |  | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)  |  | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)  |  |  |  |
| Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via<br><br><a href="http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp">http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp</a> and<br><br><a href="http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf">http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf</a> |  |  |  |

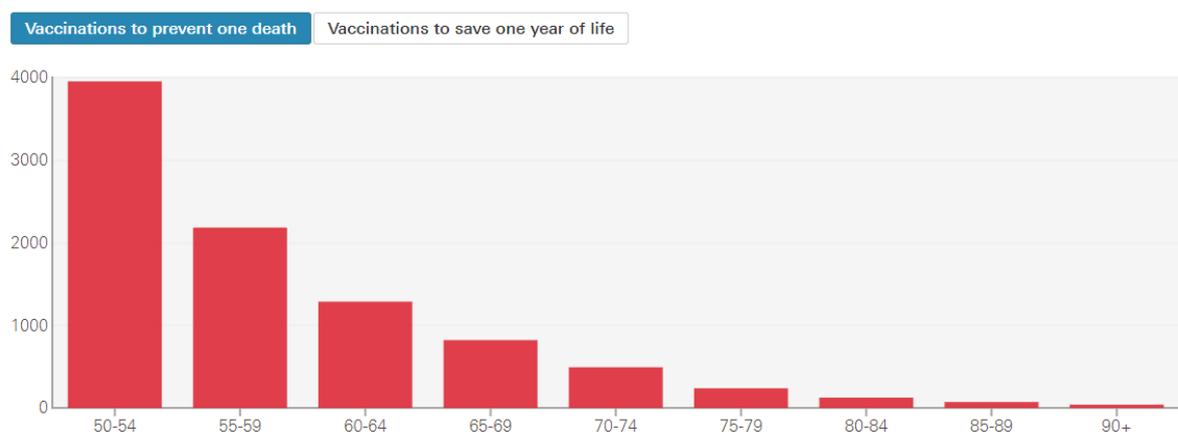
## Covid 19 and Planning for 21/22

### Introduction

We have been dealing with the restrictions and challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and working to the Scottish Government’s complex and evolving rules for student engagement and teaching as the threat of the virus is addressed.

Through the regular Colleges Scotland meetings and briefings, it is clear from a presentation by Jason Leitch, the National Clinical Director that statistics and probability of contagion have placed our sector behind some but ahead of very many others.

The following chart, one of many presented by Jason Leitch is a key piece of statistical evidence that is being used to determine the priorities around how and where to vaccinate older citizens and the impact of allowing different groups to return to some form of normality. The chart begins to illustrate why schools were targeted ahead of colleges and universities for early opening.



**REAL Centre**

The Health Foundation ©2020

Source: ONS, author's calculations • This analysis assumes those dying have average life expectancy.

A key message presented by Jason Leitch was that disciplined application of both rules and guidance is critical in reducing the virus’ spread. New virulent variants are understood to have the same ability to transmit as others but are better able to attach themselves to cells. Therefore, it is vital that rules around social distancing, masking and hygiene remains in place and that we ensure they are being rigorously applied.

### EMT – concerns and discussion

As the new EMT ‘settle in’ The Chair and I thought this would be a good opportunity for them to explore their initial concerns with the BoM through a short discussion.

### Our Process

We continue to address the rules and guidance through the Covid Group that meets regularly with all necessary participants on a Friday. The group has three main functions, to assess and manage risk, to

inform, support or challenge the EMT and to implement decisions. This process has proven to be effective and has allowed us to reflect upon and enhance our regime as circumstances change.

Generally, a change in the rules is communicated via Ministers to their officials who present to Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland. Briefings to Inverness College are via the UHI partnership or Colleges Scotland with additional written instruction to me as Principal. The SMT/EMT discuss and record our local response and present it to the Covid Group for scrutiny and a means of delivery and the outcome is recorded via standing or extra-ordinary SMT/EMT meetings. We report to the BoM where we have specific concerns or incidents as with the infections that were experienced in the ELCC.

### Planning Ahead post-Easter

As the overall prevalence of COVID-19 in the Highland local authority decreased post New Year, there was increased confidence within the College SMT that in conjunction with a reviewed and enhanced College COVID-19 Strategic Risk Assessment and associated operations protocol, a safe return to College would be possible.

The key enhancements to the protocol were around the Scottish Government mandated requirement to wear face coverings in communal indoor spaces and the implementation of 'COVID Monitors', who assist with protocol compliance matters around the Inverness Campus. The COVID Monitors are the hospitality staff, and this initiative has allowed us to bring them back into the building from furlough.

Overall, the implementation of the enhanced protocol has been largely successful, and the intention is to utilise this system for the foreseeable future. There have been some practical challenges presented with the concurrent cyber-attack on the Colleges' ICT infrastructure, however due to the efforts of all involved, this has had a minimal impact on the planning.

During planning for a reopening for face-to-face delivery, the SMT held several (minuted) meetings, in consultation with the College's Health & Safety Manager, to establish a safe and appropriate number of students that could return to Campus for delivery of essential practical activity under guidance in place since the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021. It was during this period of planning to re-open the College that the Scottish Government announced the phased return of face-to-face delivery within higher and further education sectors from 15<sup>th</sup> March, with an occupancy limitation of 5% of students. The 5% figure provided a notional benchmark with regards to assessing occupancy for the already proposed return, and a figure of 2.5% of normal occupancy for indoor face-to-face curriculum delivery was assessed as being appropriate for the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, prior to increasing to 5% for the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> March.

The Scottish Government published a timetable 'out of lockdown' on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 which discussed the return of more students to further and higher education settings. There had been some confusion between the Scottish Government and Colleges Scotland regarding what the allowances for building occupation would be, return of college students within the top three priority groups identified by Colleges Scotland as most likely not to complete this academic year (estimated as 29% of learners across the sector). The 29% figure caused some initial confusion, though after some further dialogue between the two parties it transpired that from the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 the intent of the Scottish Government is to withdraw occupancy limitations, though this is dependent upon the status of the pandemic.

In preparation for an increase in occupancy after the Easter break, the College is, through the dedicated COVID-19 Transition Management Group (CVTMG) and SMT, evaluating means to

implement an efficient but safe occupancy of buildings across its estate post-Easter. The CVTMG has been established since March 2020 and includes managerial representation from a cross-section of various College functions as well as student and Trade Union representation. To date the group has proven to be an invaluable asset in assisting and advising the SMT approach to managing COVID-19 and there is every confidence that this will be the case during the evaluation process to the proposed increase in occupancy.

### Planning Ahead 21/22

The Curriculum Plan for 21/22 has been drafted by our MIS manager. There are a number of dependencies, however.

The impact of the computer virus experienced across UHI has had an impact upon our recruitment process because admissions staff have not had access to our applications. The virus has cost us two weeks of working but, as of 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, we are now able to process schools, FE and some HE applications with the bulk of HE applications being processed with the support of UCAS.

Progression data for students moving from levels 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 remains difficult to access at the time of writing because of limited access to SITS.

The MIS manager will present a short update on numbers just ahead of this BoM which I will present. It will be apparent through those numbers that a significant risk will be income generated by those numbers.

Some of our risk has been mitigated through our FRP, in particular our previous dependency upon Temporary Staffing Requests – TSRs that are now very tightly managed and distributed. This will improve further with the direct support of MIS and the development of our barometer.

However, we do not know how large a drop in student numbers we will experience. The behaviours of student or prospective student bodies has not been predictable over the last 12 months. UHI appears to be seeing a larger comparable drop in HE numbers across the partnership against intelligence relating to other universities. However, in Inverness we bucked the UHI trend in HE numbers last year.

We will continue to utilise the initiatives developed by our marketing and Communications team and develop those areas of activity, apprenticeships in particular, that will further mitigate any risk in core numbers.

Whilst this is a risk and a worry, the position and commitment of the Scottish Government and the opposition parties is that training, retraining and education are at core of economic, post pandemic recovery plans.

Professor Chris O'Neil

24<sup>th</sup> March '21

### **Additional Facility for Construction Delivery**

#### **Lease Approval – notes of the meeting held between Chris O’Neil (CO) and Sarah Burton (SB)**

**Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 16:30**

CO requested Board approval to agree the lease for additional construction delivery space in a facility based within the Longman Industrial Estate.

SB queried the risks involved; CO advised that the monies are exceptional Covid-specific CAPEX funds which must be committed by 31 March 2021. CO stated these monies would be lost if not committed.

CO advised that the lease includes a 1-year break clause, implemented if a change of use post-Covid Act (to C10, Education) was not approved by Highland Council. This is in addition to a 3-year break clause within the 5-year lease period.

SB queried additional costs relating to fitting out the facility; CO advised that the landlord is undertaking the majority of these works – lighting, welfare facilities, security etc.

SB requested clarification this would have net zero impact on the budget for this year and next, CO confirmed and advised that Roddy Ferrier is content.

CO advised that the facility also provides an opportunity for additional activity and income generation.

SB requested clarification this would have no adverse impact on staffing, CO confirmed that the existing staff will be split across the Campus building and the new facility. Staff within the construction school have decided to work in a shift pattern to maximise classes.

SB stated she would be expecting to see performance figures on the backlog impact, and the success of any new income (in Year 1, if applicable, or beyond if the backlog does not allow for this initially), as part of the reporting to the Board. CO agreed these would be provided.

SB also stated that the Board would need reassurance, prior to the 1-year break clause, to continue for the following 2 years ahead of the 3-year break clause.

SB requested clarification that, if monies were not committed today (31 March 2021) we would lose them – CO confirmed this.

SB confirmed her **approval** on the basis of the 1-year break clause and ratification at the Board of Management meeting on Thursday 1 April 2021.

## Board of Management

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>   | Principal's Update  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]  | Professor Chris O'Neil<br>Principal and Chief Executive                         |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   | Board of Management   |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>  | 01 April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>   | 24 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>  | This report provides the Board with an overview of new and continuing activity. |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]  | Discussion  |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change |   |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | N/A   |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  | N/A   |

ITEM 5

|  |              |  |   |
|--|--------------|--|---|
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]  | Confidential |  |   |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]   | No           |  |   |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                               |              |  |   |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)   |              | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) | X |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                          | X            | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |   |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)  |              | Other (please give further details)  |   |
| For how long must the paper be withheld?<br>(express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |              |  |   |

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<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp>

and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

## Board of Management

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>  | Health and Safety Policy Review Report 2020-21  |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]   | Allan Kerr, Health and Safety Manager   |
| <b>Meeting:</b>  | <b>Board of Management</b>  |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>   | 01 April 2021   |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>  | 23 March 2021   |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>   | To provide the Board of Management Health and Safety Policy Review 2020/21 a report on amendments to the College's Health & Safety Policy |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]   | Discussion  |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compliance</li> <li>• partnership services</li> <li>• risk management</li> <li>• strategic plan</li> <li>• new opportunity/change</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>  | No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b>  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>  | No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b><br>Operational:<br>Organisational:   |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>  | No<br><b>If yes, please specify:</b>  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail   | Health and Safety Committee, comprising a cross section of the college including management, staff and Trade Union Representatives.       |

## Item 11

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Status</b> – [Confidential/Non confidential]  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business*<br>[Yes/No]  | Yes  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                               |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)   | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                          | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)  | Other (please give further details)  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld?<br>(express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |  |

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[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

## Executive Summary

There have been small but significant updates to the policy since its previous review. The updates to the Policy have been made to facilitate and endorse the College's approach to Health & Safety accountability, responsibility and ownership. This is in-line with the agreed upon Health & Safety Management System framework, 'HSG65', which supports the intended implementation of the Universities Safety & Health Association (USHA) Health & Safety management Profile (HASMMap) standard as the functional means of arriving at HSG65 compliance.

The effect of the changes has been that areas which may have previously been abstract or ambiguous with regard to expectations of Health & Safety accountability, responsibility and ownership, have now been elaborated upon to provide a clear instruction on the expectations of all College employees.

### 1. Key changes

#### 1.1. Managerial responsibilities

1.1.1. There has been an addition within 4.4.2 of the policy to make clear the expectation and instruction that managers will undertake any Health & Safety training identified by the Health & Safety Manager in pursuance of Health & Safety compliance or improvement. The purpose of this update is to ensure that training which is required to enable the college to not only meet legislative requirements but also those of the HSG65 management system and HASMAP standard is undertaken.

1.1.2. A further update to managerial responsibilities is set-out within 4.4.3 of the policy, whereby there is now specific instruction and expectation in place that managers will investigate and inform the Health & Safety Manager of any dangerous or potentially dangerous activities which have given cause for employees to stop work, per the responsibilities of employees within 4.11.1 of the policy.

#### 1.2. Health & Safety Manager Responsibilities

1.2.1. An administrative update has been made within 4.5.1 of the policy to reflect the changing in reporting of the Health & Safety Manager to the College Principal and Chief Executive Officer.

1.2.2. The responsibilities of the Health & Safety Manager, with regards to contractor management within 4.5.1 of the policy, have been updated to reflect the advisory and monitoring function of contractor management rather than the direct administration and management as was previously in place. The purpose of this revision is to reflect the ownership of respective departments with regards to managing contractors, while making clear that the Health & Safety Manager is to provide advice and guidance where necessary.

**1.2.3.** An update has been made regarding the remit of the Health & Safety Manager with regards to 'sanctioning' cessation of activity where Health & Safety is being compromised significantly. This has been updated to reflect the inherent responsibilities of College SMT members as organisational directors within the definitions of [Section 37 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974](#) and the remit of the Health & Safety Manager to provide 'competent assistance', per [Regulation 7 of the Management of the Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#).

### **1.3. Technician Responsibilities**

**1.3.1.** The entirety of 4.10 within the policy regarding School Technicians has been removed. This is due to Technicians being College employees covered under 4.11.1 of the policy. Furthermore, the specific duties that were outlined as being Technician responsibilities were not deemed to be appropriate and placed undue and potentially inappropriate expectations upon them with regards to conducting Health & Safety responsibilities.

**1.3.2.** It was felt that the previous version of the policy placed undue burden and responsibility on Technicians to fulfil what should be a shared responsibility under the direction of respective school managers (i.e. heads and deputies of schools). This is one of the aspects that is actively being addressed and will be mitigated during the implementation of the USHA HASMAP standard.

### **1.4. Employee Responsibilities**

**1.4.1.** As has been updated in 4.4.2 of the Manager's Responsibilities, within 4.11.1 of the policy, all other employees are to undertake training identified by the Health & Safety Manager in pursuance of Health & Safety compliance and improvement.

**1.4.2.** There has been an addition to the responsibilities of all employees within 4.11.1 of the policy, which places a clear instruction and expectation to actively stop unsafe activities when observed. This is to make clear the requirements stipulated within [Section 7 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974](#).

### **1.5. Student Responsibilities**

**1.5.1.** Paragraph 4.12.3 within the policy has been updated to provide an explicit expectation and instruction that College students will be subject to the student disciplinary process if found to be in contravention of College Health & Safety policies, procedures or protocols.

## **2. Health & Safety Management System**

**2.1.** To provide some context upon references made within Section 1 of this report, the College has made a commitment to and is adopting the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) HSG65 model as the framework for the College's Health & Safety Management System. To provide a functional method in the implementation of this framework, the intention is to utilise USHA standard,

which aligns with the HSG65 model of 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' and is compliant with the HSE legislation and the principles of Health & Safety management, detailed within HSG65.

- 2.2. The key component of the USHA standard requires devolved ownership and responsibility for Health and Safety at all organisational and functional levels. In practice, this involves direct ownership and responsibility for Health & Safety management at the departmental level. The means of measuring the status of compliance with the USHA guidance is via the HASMAP standard, which provides a series of auditable benchmarks to establish the status of Health & Safety management and overall Health & Safety culture.

### Summary

While there have been some updates and amendments made to it, the College's Health & Safety Policy and associated Policy Statement has long provided a means of stating the College's clear intent to put Health & Safety at the forefront of its operations. The changes which have been made within the latest revision are to reflect the developing approach being taken by the College on how Health & Safety is managed at the organisational level.

The recent change in reporting manager for the Health & Safety Manager as being directly to the College Principal and Chief Executive Officer in itself demonstrates the prioritisation and value placed upon Health & Safety within the organisation. This intent is further evidenced by the Principal and SMT's endorsement of the amendments made to the policy, where it is accepted that to successfully implement a functioning Health & Safety Management system, there has to be acceptance and ownership of Health & Safety responsibilities at all levels of the College organisation.

The implementation of HSG65, and in turn, the USHA HASMAP standard, will play a significant role in not only providing a means of standardising and benchmarking Health & Safety management, but also providing a means of developing a positive and continuously improving Health & Safety culture.



## HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

**REFERENCE: PL/HR/2020/001**

|                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Policy Owner                | Principal and Chief Executive Officer |
| Lead Officer                | Principal and Chief Executive Officer |
| Review Officer              | Health and Safety Manager             |
| Date first approved by BoM  | 9 March 2009                          |
| First Review Date           | 7 March 2010                          |
| Date review approved by BoM | 30 April 2020                         |
| Next Review Date            | March 2021                            |
| Equality impact assessment  | 4 February 2021                       |

| Reviewer                | Date     | Review Action/Impact                   |
|-------------------------|----------|--|
| Health & Safety Manager | 07.03.10 |  |
| Health & Safety Manager | 30.05.12 |  |
| Health & Safety Manager | 20.06.12 |  |
| Health & Safety Manager | 19.03.15 |  |
| Health & Safety Manager | 28.03.17 |  |
| Health & Safety Manager | 29.05.18 | Review approved by BoM audit Committee |
| Health & Safety Manager | 21.03.19 | Review approved by BoM                 |
| Health & Safety Manager | 30.04.20 | Review approved by BoM                 |

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## 1. Policy Statement

Inverness College UHI acknowledges its statutory and moral obligations to adopt the highest standards of health, safety and wellbeing for staff, students and visitors.

Inverness College UHI is committed to achieve and maintain recognised quality standards in health and safety.

As an education provider and employer, Inverness College UHI is committed to developing a culture of competence and continuous improvement in health and safety management and practice. This will be achieved at all levels through promotion of attitudes and behaviours which instil in students and staff an expectation that sound health and safety practice is the norm.

In support of this, Inverness College UHI is committed to:

- Conform with all health and safety laws and regulations and relevant standards as the minimum accepted behaviour
- Preventing injury and ill health to all persons under the control of Inverness College UHI
- Maintain a secure, safe and healthy working environment
- Identifying all hazards and risks associated with its activities
- Providing suitable controls to mitigate risks arising from its activities to as low as reasonably practicable
- Promoting an incident free work place
- Commit to continual improvement of management systems and Health and Safety performance, regular review and revising of this policy
- Providing and maintaining safe working equipment
- Safe handling storing and transportation of any substances associated with its activities
- Sufficient and competent information, Instruction, training and supervision

The Board of Management sets the overarching policy for Health and Safety and delegates responsibility to the Principal and Chief Executive to ensure the college fulfils its responsibilities.

Principal: .....

Date: .....

Chair of Board: .....

Date: .....

## 2. Legislative Framework/Related Policies

- 2.1. The Health and Safety at Work *etc.* Act 1974.
- 2.2. Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regs 2006
- 2.3. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998
- 2.4. Manual Handling Operations 1992
- 2.5. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- 2.6. The Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002
- 2.7. Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- 2.8. Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
- 2.9. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005
- 2.10. The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) (Amendment) Regs 2011
- 2.11. Fire Safety (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010
- 2.12. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regs 2013
- 2.13. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (Amendment) Regs 2004
- 2.14. The Health and Safety Information for Employees (Amendment) Regs 2009
- 2.15. Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (As amended 2002)
- 2.16. Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007
- 2.17. Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- 2.18. The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998
- 2.19. The Work at Height Regulations 2005

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all staff, students and visitors within Inverness College UHI.
- 3.2. Contractors are covered by this policy with reference to the contractors' management system.

## 4. Organisation and Responsibilities

To ensure the effective implementation of the health and safety policy, specific responsibilities are detailed below.

### 4.1. Board of Management

- 4.1.1. The Board of Management will set the policy direction for health, safety and wellbeing and will have overall responsibility for ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, students, visitors or other persons affected by the organisations activities. The Board of Management will ensure health and safety management systems and standards are monitored regularly to ensure their effectiveness and will scrutinise reports to Board accordingly.

## 4.2. Principal and Chief Executive

4.2.1 The Principal has delegated responsibility, reporting to the Board of Management, for ensuring the college fulfils its responsibilities.

4.2.2 The Principal will:

- Ensure that health safety and wellbeing is an integral part of the overall management and working culture.
- Ensure that procedures to assess risks are established and effective control measures are implemented.
- Develop a positive attitude to health safety and wellbeing amongst employees by visibly demonstrating commitment to the continuous improvement of the health and safety performance throughout Inverness College.
- Ensure regular monitoring and review Health Safety and Wellbeing Management Policies and Procedures.
- Ensure that relevant meetings address health safety and wellbeing issues and that appropriate actions are taken to address issues that arise.
- Provide Joint consultation arrangements through the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

## 4.3. Senior Management Team

4.3.1 The Senior Management Team has delegated authority and functional responsibility for the activities carried out within their areas of corporate influence.

4.3.2 In order to meet their health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities, they will:

- Liaise with the Principal to establish the principles of continual improvement with regard to health, safety and wellbeing.
- Be aware of the Health and Safety at Work *etc.* Act 1974 and associated legislation relevant to the activities of the college.
- Allocate sufficient financial resources to allow the policy and procedures to be effectively implemented.
- Demonstrate commitment to achieving and maintaining a high standard of safety performance and accident prevention.
- Ensure monitoring and review of the implementation of the Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures.

## 4.4. Managers and Heads of Schools

4.4.1 Managers and Heads of Schools have a health safety and wellbeing responsibility for the activities and functions carried out within their areas of operational responsibility.

4.4.2 In order to meet their responsibilities, Managers and Heads of Schools will:

- Ensure risk assessments, including assessments of plant, machinery and equipment (i.e. PUWER Assessments) are carried out where necessary and regularly reviewed in line with the requirements of health and safety legislation and the college Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures.
- Undertake training identified by the Health & Safety Manager in the pursuance of Health & Safety compliance or improvement.
- Set clear measurable objectives to ensure progressive improvement.
- Provide all personnel with, so far as reasonably practicable;
  - Safe place of work
  - Safe plant and machinery
  - Safe working environment
  - Safe system of work
  - Safe handling, storing and transportation
  - Sufficient and competent information, instruction, training and supervision

#### 4.4.3 Managers and Heads of Schools will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that Inverness College UHI's Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy is explained to employees and they are made aware of their health safety and wellbeing duties and responsibilities and that tutors equally convey this to students under their control.
- The training needs of employees are assessed and addressed to include the requirement for role specific induction training for new employees.
- Ensuring that the activities of college employees and contractors do not expose employees, students, contractors or others to risk.
- In the event of being notified of dangerous activity being stopped by employees, they are to investigate the matter and inform the Health & Safety Manager of the circumstances.

## 4.5. Health and Safety Manager

#### 4.5.1 The Health and Safety Manager reports to the College Principal and CEO and has responsibility for:

- Reviewing, revising, implementing, embedding and monitoring compliance of all health safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and arrangements.
- Planning, implementing and co-ordinating the risk assessment, inspection and internal/external audit programmes.
- Planning, Implementing and co-ordinating the risk assessment process.
- Developing appropriate performance measures and reporting performance standards to ensure continuous improvement.
- Liaising with HR regarding health surveillance requirements.
- Preparing papers, reports and statistical data for identified Committees.
- Ensuring emergency evacuation procedures, including personal evacuation plans, are tested and reviewed on a regular basis.
- Recording of accident/incidents and reporting in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

- Investigating and reporting on accidents, incidents and/ or near misses.

- Organising, co-ordinating and supporting safety personnel (first aiders and fire wardens).
- Identifying information, instruction and training requirements and delivering effective solutions.
- Provide advice and guidance to College departments/functions on contractor management.
- Acting as a point of contact for Enforcing Authorities.
- Maintaining own continuous professional development.
- Monitoring effective implementation of the Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- Providing specialist advice and support to senior management and all departments/schools including the disseminating of good practice.
- Ensuring that the appropriate initial college health and safety induction training is given to all new employees.
- Advising SMT on the suspension, of activities where health and safety is being compromised significantly.

## **4.6. Estates and Campus Services Manager**

4.6.1 The Estates and Campus Services Manager advises the appropriate member of the SMT and is responsible for:

- Fire Marshalls at all campuses.
- The testing and recording of all fire detecting equipment.
- Ensuring all means of escape are fully maintained and functional.
- The maintenance and inspection of all firefighting equipment.
- All visiting contractors, including the control of the Approved Contractor Register and issuing of Permits to Work.
- Ensuring all buildings, services and equipment owned or managed by the college are fit for purpose and do not cause, or contribute towards, unacceptable risks to health and safety.
- Testing inspection and maintenance of all building services in line with legislation.

## **4.7. Union Appointed Health and Safety Representatives**

4.7.1 Staff appointed under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 shall:

- Assist with the promotion of safe working practices.
- Familiarise themselves fully with the health and safety policy and arrangements.
- Liaise with managers and the College Health and Safety Manager in accident investigations and safety audits.
- Attend the College Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee, take part in proceedings, representing their members and presenting to them information gathered from meetings.

## 4.8. Fire Marshals

4.8.1 Inverness College UHI campuses are sub-divided into zones. Each zone has an identified fire marshal whose responsibility is:

- To ensure in an emergency, everyone evacuates their zone safely and does not re-enter until the “all clear” is given.
- To assist disabled persons, where required, with evacuation to a place of safety and to ensure the chief fire marshal is advised accordingly.

## 4.9. First Aiders

4.9.1 Inverness College UHI campuses are sub-divided into zones. Each zone has identified First Aiders whose responsibility is:

- To provide first aid for any staff students or visitors who require attention within their zone.
- To check and ensure adequate first aid supplies are always available.

## 4.10

## 4.11 Employees

4.11.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations place duties upon employees, at all levels, while at work. These duties include the following:

- To take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.
- To co-operate with the employer, so far as is reasonably necessary to enable them to meet their statutory health and safety duties, including undertaking training identified by the Health & Safety Manager in the pursuance of Health & Safety compliance or improvement.
- No-one may intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare.
- Any employee who is required to operate machinery, equipment, dangerous substances, transport, safety devices or a means of production is to do so in accordance with training or instructions provided by the employer.
- Employees must make the employer aware of any serious imminent dangers to health and safety. All employees are expected to stop dangerous work practices from taking place where observed. Where an employee believes a work practice to be dangerous they are to instruct those involved to stop the activity and immediately inform the relevant line manager (responsible for the department, school, function or area in which the activity is taking place).
- Participate in and conduct departmental Risk Assessments as directed by line managers, the Health & Safety Manager and Senior Management Team.

## 4.12 Students

4.12.1 All students shall comply with Inverness College UHI's Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy as published and with any health and safety procedures relating to the facilities which the student is using.

4.12.2 A student shall exercise reasonable care:

- For his or her personal safety.
- For the safety of other persons who may be affected by his or her acts or omissions.
- For the safety of the property of Inverness College UHI and of its students, staff, officers and visitors.

4.12.3 It shall be a disciplinary offence for any student to:

- Intentionally or recklessly misuse, tamper, or interfere with any firefighting equipment, fire prevention equipment, fire doors, fire detection equipment, fire alarm activation points, fire signs.
- Intentionally or recklessly misuse any equipment provided by the University in the interests of health, safety or welfare in pursuance of the Health and Safety at Work Act or of any relevant statutory provisions relating to health and safety.
- Fail to use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.
- Fail to adhere to College Health & Safety policies, procedures or protocols.

## 5. Compliance

5.1. This policy must be complied with and it will be audited regularly with reports going to the appropriate committee.

5.2. Inverness College UHI will comply with legal and other requirements applicable to the identified health and safety hazards.

5.3. All new legal and other requirements will be evaluated, and documented, to determine applicability and impact to Inverness College UHI.

## 6. Objectives and Targets

6.1. Objectives will be identified and set in line with the annual review and operational planning process.

## 7. Communication

7.1. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy shall be actively communicated throughout the College using a variety of channels; examples of such channels include but are not limited to:

- Via the Policy Folder.
- Inclusion within the new start/contractor induction process.
- Provision to all external interested parties upon written request.
- Health and Safety notice boards.

## 8. Monitoring

8.1. Each college policy will be monitored and its implementation evaluated. Appropriate procedures for monitoring and evaluation are the responsibility of the lead officer. These procedures will be subject to audit by the Health and Safety and Quality departments

8.2. The following health and safety monitoring methods may be used to monitor implementation:

- **Active methods** monitor the design, development, installation and operation of management arrangements.
- **Reactive methods** identify evidence of poor health and safety practice through the risk assessment process and take immediate action as required.

## 9. Audit

9.1. A schedule will be developed and implemented to cover health, safety and environmental audits. Scope and criteria for audits will consider (but not be limited to):

- Management system
- Existing and new policies and procedures
- Student enrolment and induction
- Staff induction.
- Risk assessment and environmental aspects
- Outputs from external audits or previous internal audits

9.2. The Audits will be planned to ensure that areas which are subject to legal compliance are completed each year.

## 10. Review

- 10.1. This policy and supporting arrangements will be reviewed annually to ensure currency of content, arrangements, new legislative requirements and to provide a framework for the setting and reviewing of health and safety improvement objectives.
- 10.2. This policy may also be updated outside of the stated annual timeframe (i.e. changes to legislation, or as the result of review).
- 10.3. Revisions will be brought to the attention of staff and students through agreed arrangements for health and safety and policy consultation and communication.

## Board of Management

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Subject/Title:</b>   | Partnership and Partnership Council Update   |
| <b>Author:</b><br>[Name and Job title]  | Professor Chris O'Neil<br>Principal and Chief Executive  |
| <b>Meeting:</b>   | Board of Management  |
| <b>Meeting Date:</b>  | 01 April 2021  |
| <b>Date Paper prepared:</b>   | 26 March 2021  |
| <b>Brief Summary of the paper:</b>  | This report provides the Board with a background with regards to the Partnership Council and their meetings. |
| <b>Action requested:</b><br>[Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]  | Discussion   |
| <b>Link to Strategy:</b><br>Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:<br><input type="checkbox"/> compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> partnership services<br><input type="checkbox"/> risk management<br><input type="checkbox"/> strategic plan<br><input type="checkbox"/> new opportunity/change |  |
| <b>Resource implications:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Risk implications:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Equality and Diversity implications:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Consultation:</b><br>[staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail  | N/A  |

|  |                  |  |  |
|--|------------------|--|--|
| <b>Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]</b>  | Non-Confidential |  |  |
| <b>Freedom of Information</b><br>Can this paper be included in “open” business* [Yes/No]   | Yes              |  |  |
| *If a paper should <b>not</b> be included within “open” business, please highlight below the reason.                               |                  |  |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)   |                  | Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30) |  |
| Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)                          |                  | Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)           |  |
| Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)  |                  | Other (please give further details)  |  |
| For how long must the paper be withheld?<br>(express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.) |                  |  |  |

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp>

and

[http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public\\_Interest\\_Test.pdf](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf)

## **Partnership and Partnership Council Update**

### Introduction

The wider partnership meets formally through the Partnership Council every month. Partnership Council is a decision making and operational body which, under recent developments in the Partnership and its governance, is held to scrutiny by the Regional Strategic Committee.

In addition, and as a response to the pandemic, the Partnership Crisis Management Team, CMT initially met on a daily basis. This was reduced to twice weekly and is now a weekly meeting, generally on a Thursday morning and is now titled the Crisis Management Group, CMG. As the immediate 'crisis' part of the crisis became a new 'normal', the CMG has evolved effectively into an operational meeting that deals with a number of operational issues, pandemic related or not.

The new Vice Chancellor has stated that he wants to maintain the weekly meetings and reduce the membership to the Principals and other key staff as a cornerstone of partnership working. The meetings now consider and develop initiatives and papers ahead of the Partnership Council meetings.

The Principals also meet on a weekly basis, normally Monday evening for informal discussion and support.

### Partnership Council

The new Vice Chancellor has introduced a refreshed sense of rigour and accountability to the Partnership Council meetings. The themes that are being revisited in both the standing Partnership Councils and occasional extra ordinary meetings could be summarised as –

- Partnership sustainability
- Student numbers
- Compliance and reporting
- Brand and position
- Student experience

Whilst these themes remain reasonably constant, they set the contexts for debate, information and decisions that range from residencies to co-ordinated responses for information. As the Chair, the Vice Chancellor has outlined the expectations of Court and the Regional Strategic Committee of the Partnership Council.

An ongoing theme and strand is sustainability and the partnership's work to align services, remove cost and increase efficiency. The Change Management Plan is the outcome of around two years of work to identify cost and inefficient working.

### Special Partnership Council 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

A one agenda item meeting of Partnership Council was called to critically assess a draft 'UHI Financial Blueprint'. This may well prove to have been a critically important meeting for UHI.

Within the meeting it was made clear that Court was disappointed by a general lack of progress in delivering the Change Management Plan and the associated efficiencies needed to address a UHI wide deficit that was initially described as £20m.

The Blueprint acknowledges a significant deficit does exist but following challenge to the methodology which defined it as £20m, a lower figure of £16m has been defined which includes an acknowledgement of £1m of Inverness College savings (a recurrent some now at around £1.5m).

## Item 12

The Financial Blueprint is important because it identifies why but not how savings or efficiencies need to be made. The Vice Chancellor has identified a reduction in the workstreams that were created to define the where and how, through consolidation and so there are now five key workstreams that include the curriculum, branding, EO and finance.

These themes are now starting to come through into Partnership Council and the following report from Partnership Council demonstrates this.

Professor Chris O'Neil

## Partnership council update – issue 6, 3 March 2021

Discussions were held on the following items:

### Financial blueprint

Members discussed a financial blueprint that had been further developed following meetings and stakeholder feedback. They supported the blueprint's principles and the direction of travel. They noted the proposals it contained would be subject to further detailed scrutiny, feasibility, and planning work -- as well as extensive consultation—in the implementation phase following consideration by the university court on 17 March 2021. They also discussed and agreed additions to risk and impact assessments which would be included in the proposal for the university court.

### SRUC options appraisal

They received an update on progress on an options appraisal for alignment with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). They noted that an independent assurance group had been convened to provide oversight to the project, and that consultants had been appointed. Following an engagement and analysis phase, a strategic options appraisal report was anticipated for May 2021.

### Arctic engagement

They were pleased to hear about efforts to engage with the Scottish Government's Arctic strategy and approved the establishment of an Arctic development group to take the lead on work in this area.

### International student survey

They discussed the results of the international student survey: the first ever bespoke, regional-level survey of current international students by the university partnership. They welcomed the positive satisfaction rate of 89%, which they noted was significantly higher than the national student survey 2020 score (82%) and heard that areas for development had already been identified and actions were underway to further enhance this.

### Income generation

They supported steps taken to implement pilot initiatives to generate increased levels of income for the university partnership and promote collaborative working. They also agreed further development of governance arrangements and resourcing to increase income generation.

They received updates on the change management plan, student residences, exam board clerk funding, social media and intellectual policies, academic partner agreements, health and safety resourcing, as well as standing finance and risk items.

This is intended as a summary briefing and is not a formal minute of the meeting.

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|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Committee</b>   | University Court  |
| <b>Subject</b>   | Academic Partner and University Senior Management Team Quarterly Status Updates |
| <b>Action requested</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For information only                        |
| <b>Brief summary of the paper</b>  | Update reports for period covering 01 September 2020 – 30 November 2020         |
| <b>Resource implications</b><br>(If yes, please provide details)   | No<br>Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>Risk implications</b><br>(If yes, please provide details)   | Yes<br>Issues/ concerns captured in paper                                       |
| <b>Date paper prepared</b>   | 18/11/2020  |
| <b>Date of committee meeting</b>   | 25/11/2020  |
| <b>Author</b>  | University SMT and AP Principals  |
| <b>Link with strategy</b>  | Information sharing   |
| <b><u>Equality and diversity</u></b><br>Does this activity/ proposal require an Equality Impact Assessment?  | No<br>If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.             |
| <b><u>Data Protection</u></b><br>Does this activity/ proposal require a Data Protection Impact Assessment?   | No<br>If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.             |
| <b><u>Island communities</u></b><br>Does this activity/ proposal have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities)? | No<br>If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.             |
| <b>Status</b> (e.g. confidential)  | Non-confidential  |
| <b>Freedom of information</b>  | Open  |
| <b>Consultation</b>  | Described in paper  |

**No reports provided by Argyll College UHI or Inverness College UHI****Contents**

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## Introduction from the Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor

I am pleased to provide court members this quarterly update on the portfolio activities of the university senior management team as well as institutional updates from our academic partners.

Court members will appreciate, as I do, the ongoing hard work of colleagues from across the partnership in this first semester, and will no doubt join me in giving their continued thanks for the efforts of all our staff, students, and communities in responding to this exceptionally difficult period.

Work continues at pace to respond to the challenges of Covid-19 across the university partnership. I continue to chair twice-weekly crisis management group meetings with senior executives, and Christmas travel for students, academic delivery for semester 2, student placements, student welfare, and student accommodation preparedness are amongst a range of issues we continue to tackle collegiately to ensure the best possible student experiences for our learners. Extensive engagement with senior colleagues across EO and the partnership and with key operational lead staff has been critical over the past 3 months.

The change management programme has also been a high priority for us this quarter, and I'm pleased to report on the renewed focus and urgency now being built up on the actions emerging from the various workstreams this programme encompasses and discussions about increasing pace.

This quarter we were pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Todd Walker as principal and vice chancellor from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021. I also announced my retirement after fourteen years with the university this December. I am already working closely with my senior management team, our chair of court, with Professor Walker and others to ensure a smooth transition. Finally, I want to express both my thanks and best wishes for the future to all colleagues across the university partnership.

Other meetings of note include:

- Scheduled Regional Strategy Committee, Partnership Council, Finance and General Purposes, Audit, University Court, and Academic Council meetings.
- VSS planning and associated Remuneration Committee meetings on 2 and 16 September, and 7 October
- Weekly catch-ups with Professor Todd Walker since 12 October
- Fortnightly meetings with Chair of Court
- One to one meetings with CEOs HIE and SFC.
- US Main Committee meeting and US/SFC Liaison meetings on 28 October
- Weekly meetings with Scottish University Vice-Chancellors involved in MillionPlus
- Monthly catch-ups with HISA President
- Staff Forum on 24 September and 23 November
- Scottish Government briefings and fora in relation to COVID-19
- Islands Forum on 29 September and UHI/HIE meeting on development of UHI Strategic Forum on 13 October
- Academic Titles Review Board (application review ahead of main meeting in March 2021)
- Meeting with Professoriate on 17 November
- Foundation on 19 November
- Honorary Awards Committee on 26 November

**Professor Crichton Lang**  
**Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor**

## Chief Operating Officer and Secretary

Prepared by Fiona M Larg

### Notable accomplishments

Publication of the university's updated economic impact report which highlights the £560m contribution the university and its partners makes to the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire economies every year, together with support for 6,200 jobs. The assessment undertaken shows that for every £1 spent, the partnership puts £4 back into the economies its serves. (Reports were also commissioned for academic partners by local authority area). <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/about-uhi/facts-and-figures/publications/>

Following an extensive recruitment exercise, successful appointment of Professor Todd Walker as the university's next principal and vice-chancellor. Professor Walker will commence on 1 February 2021, the day of the university's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Shetland UHI Ltd - work continues to register the new merged Shetland entity as a charity and undertake associated governance requirements.
- Graduation celebration week - graduation and marketing and communication practitioners across the partnership ensured our graduates were celebrated in early October. This included online messages, a social media campaign and graduate listings in the Press & Journal and the Herald.
- LIS have been working with academic partner ICT teams and student funding support colleagues to source and allocate 500 laptops and data connectivity packages to the students in most need as part of the SFC's student digital poverty support funding. The university has purchased a further 300 laptops to supplement the SFC funded numbers and prepare for Semester 2.

### Issues or concerns

- Asymptomatic Covid testing pre-winter break. A large amount of activity has been undertaken to provide input into and ensure adherence with SG plans as they are very onerous for small sites. Major issue re returning students as no guidance yet from SG.
- Residences – ongoing work with Cushman & Wakefield
- Delays with the programme for the proposed new Life Sciences Innovation Centre at Inverness Campus due to HIE not having ERDF funding confirmation is now projecting an end of construction during mid-June 2022 – within required timeframe for funding.

## Vice-Principal Further Education

Prepared by John Kemp

### Notable accomplishments

The university has now distributed nearly 500 laptops to students in digital poverty. Around 400 of these were supported from the additional funding from the SFC, others have been bought from our own resources. While a large amount of the supply for students who started on the supply was delayed because of long lead time on order because of huge demand for laptops in the early part of the academic year, we now have a supply that can be used for January starts and a further supply that can be accessed via library loans for students who do not meet the tight criteria for the digital poverty equipment. Student support staff in executive office and the partners have worked together closely and effectively to ensure that we had a system that ensured the equipment went to the students in greatest need.

Islands Deal Strategic Outline Case. The university has led on the creation of the strategic outline case for the skills, entrepreneurship and talent attraction part of the islands deal. We have worked closely with Highlands and Islands Enterprise in the preparation of the case. The case has been received well by the Government and will now proceed to the next phases, inclusion in the heads of terms and then a full business case.

### Issues or concerns

We did not meet our credit target for academic year 2019-20. We understand from SFC that we were one of only two regions not to do so. Meeting the target in 2020-21 could be challenging as SFC have added 2,000 credits to our target without additional payment. In preparing new curriculum for semester 2 we will maximize the use of our SFC funding before seeking other funds. This has the advantage that we can be more flexible and quicker with our offer.

We recently sought information on the impact of continuing (or more severe) Covid-19 related restrictions on delivery of the FE curriculum. Even with no change to the restrictions there are challenges in delivering workshop and salon-based elements of the curriculum in some larger colleges as social distancing means that class sizes are smaller and classes sometimes have to be delivered twice. We are continuing to work with the partners on possible solutions.

## Vice-Principal Research

Prepared by Professor Neil Simco

### Notable accomplishments

As advised in my last report, the University has received £918K in COVID related research uplift funding from the SFC. A decision was made to direct 20% of this funding to cross-partnership strategic research projects focusing on the impact of COVID on the economy and society of the region. Following a bidding process, proposals for 14 projects were received, involving 11 academic partners/EO. Four projects have been funded:

1. Community-determined change-scapes of recovery: Case studies across the Highlands and Islands of the Impact of and strategies for recovery from the COVID19 pandemic – PIs Vicky Johnson and Ros Bryce – APs involved – PC/IC/ OC/WHC/NHC. Value £100K
2. Developing Post COVID resilience capacity for families – PI Malcolm Clark – APs involved MC/PC/OC/AC. Value £20K
3. Impact Assessment of the COVID19 Crisis on Gaelic speaking families with young children attending sgoitean-àraich (Gaelic nurseries) – PI Angela Weir - APs involved – LCC and Language Sciences Institute (EO). Value £35K
4. Understanding the experiences of the COVID19 pandemic for residents with long-term conditions (LTCs) for families, carers and support organisations in rural areas of the Highlands and Islands PI – Sarah-Anne Munoz – APs involved Rural Health and Well-being (EO), Nursing (EO), LCC and IC. Value £28K

A new and upgraded system for research ethics – HAPLO – has been launched this autumn, which together with new research ethics training materials in animal and environmental science strengthens the University's arrangements for research ethics.

Two of the University's Centres have been renamed this autumn. The Centre for Rural Creativity has become the Centre for Islands' Creativity and the Centre for Remote and Rural Communities has become the Centre for Remote and Sustainable Communities.

### Significant events/ awards

The annual postgraduate student induction event was held - for the first time in an online format - in October and the annual Research Forum, attended primarily by research leaders across the partnership was held in September. Dr Stuart Fancey, Director of Research and Innovation, at the SFC provided a keynote statement which articulated current developments in the sector. Deliberations focused on the positioning of UHI's research and knowledge exchange work as being critical for the region's economy, but nationally and internationally engaged.

Preparations for the UK wide research excellence assessment, REF 2021 continue at pace. The submission date is now 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, and this autumn has seen three milestones achieved; a scrutiny event associated with the environment statements for each of the seven subject areas which will be submitted; a scrutiny event focused on the required 17 case studies; and unconscious bias training prior to outputs being selected for the REF.

Additionally our Code of Practice has been amended to take account of COVID impacts and these amendments have been approved at national level.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

Renewed discussions have occurred involving Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), UHI and HIE. Focused on planetary health and the 'blue' and 'green' economy, these deliberations are designed to strengthen place-based research which over time would be impactful in the Highlands and Islands region.

### Issues or concerns

Phase 2 of the SFC sector review will focus on research and innovation. The phase 1 report indicates that there are a number of "different directions of travel" in regard to future sectoral change, especially around "research intensification" and the extent to which there may be a migration of activity towards the large urban universities. It will be very important for UHI to present a clearly articulated position in the phase 2 consultation.

Ongoing uncertainty around BREXIT and the prospect of 'no deal' potentially adds turbulence to future research funding. Efforts are being made across the partnership to diversify research funding.

## Vice-Principal International and External Engagement

Prepared by Professor Stuart Gibb

### Notable accomplishments

#### Non-SFC recruitment updates:

- EU and fee-paying (RUK and INT) enrolment as of 15/10/20 - Key points
  - Total non-SFC enrolment for 2020-21 **up 7.5 %** on 2019-20
  - EU enrolment **down 8.9 %** for 2020-21 on 2019-20
  - Total fee paying (RUK + INT) enrolment for 2020-21 **up 21.1 %** on 2019
- UHI have established a 'pilot' with the University of Akureyri (UNAK, Iceland) to promote wider access to higher education in Northern territories. Icelandic students on UHI's MBA, Executive programme have tailored online academic provision, and receive additional support from the UNAK's Continuing Education department – income generation of pilot ~ £100k. Plan is to extend the approach into wider subject areas including Human Resource Management, Leadership and Management, Digital Pedagogy.
- UHI delivers tailored BEng Electrical and Electronic Engineering Systems and BEng Mechanical Engineering Systems through the joint UHI-Hunan Institute of Engineering Micro-Campus in China (co-ordinated by Perth College).  
Enrolment with HIE has increased in both groups in 2020-21: 93 electrical students (an increase of 27% on 2019-20), and 58 mechanical students (up 49%).

### Significant events/ awards

- 'OneHealth Breakthrough Partnership (OHBP)' awarded 'highly commended' in 2020 British Medical Journal Healthcare Awards. OHBP involves UHI, NHS Highland, Scottish Water, HIE and James Hutton Institute. Award recognises NHS Caithness General being first hospital in the world to secure accreditation by the Alliance for Water Stewardship and in doing so advance NHS's social responsibility healthcare & the environment.
- Meeting Ellen Wong, Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate General in Scotland

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Development collaborations and partnerships partners with EU and RoW organisations includes:
  - University of Akureyri pilot 'partnership' recruitment project - EO, PC (see above)
  - University of Bhutan collaboration - LCC
  - Council for At Risk Academics hosting – SAMS, EO
  - Global Challenge Research Fund: Health, Polluted Water and Soils Network - NHC, UHI, KE
  - Arctic Strategy: Including Uni. of the Arctic, FCO, UKRI, OIC engagement - SAMS, OC, EO
  - International scholarships (Chinese funded) – PC, NHC (+SAMS & NHC))
  - International Student Recruitment Project : contributions from most APs

### Issues or concerns

- Failure to capitalise upon UHI's experience and online / blended curriculum proposition in Covid environment to grow student numbers & income from non-SFC sources.
- Lack of marketing resource / effort to recruit fee paying students (focused on domestic recruitment in Covid environment)
- Mid-project removal (and subsequent re-assignment) of Continuous Improvement Team from the 'International Recruitment Project'
- Aspirations and expectations around international student recruitment need to be balanced with, and in proportion to, the level of investment and resources available

## Vice-Principal Tertiary

Prepared by Lydia Rohmer

[Notable accomplishments](#)

This period continues to be dominated by crisis management of the COVID pandemic. Key activities in this period included:

- Successful implementation of the partnership-wide **Student Engagement and Recruitment Project**, to secure student recruitment through and beyond the Covid period for AY2020-21. The project was designed earlier in the year, to mitigate the then perceived high risk to successful student retention and recruitment for AY2020-21. The project successfully delivered, with an increase in HE full-time students on the previous academic year; FE student recruitment is stable, although the practical nature of many courses pose challenges in some partners. FE student recruitment has significant part-time proportionate activity, with recruitment ongoing through the academic year. The project has also been successful in positioning the university in a disruptive and competitive environment, with significantly enhanced engagement levels with web and online media content and messages. The project has brought 12 out of 13 partners into formal collaboration on marketing and communications: following a formal project evaluation in September, a formal steering group has been consolidated, with joint plans for recruitment and engagement activities and campaigns planned for AY2021/22 recruitment. Examples of project collaborations include the Online Graduation Celebrations in early October, and the partnership-wide UHI Online Open Week from 23-26 November.
- **Branding – Visual Identity (Change Plan Workstream)**: the Covid-delayed work on a harmonized visual identity has been refreshed and re-approved by Partnership Council in November. Procurement of a design agency is currently underway.
- **Branding – Ambassador Programme and Strategic Positioning Workstream (Change Plan Workstreams)**: This project was delayed due to Covid19 is currently being re-developed in light of work undertaken on the Student Recruitment and engagement Project, as well as discussions on the Strategic Positioning workstream. The revised report and recommendation will be presented to Partnership Council in January 21.
- **UHI Strategic Plan Workshop**: Branding and Positioning – co-lead of the recent pan-UHI strategic planning seminar to establish context and emerging priorities for new strategic plan development. onSupport UHI strategic response to COVID as part of Crisis Management Team, and as member of PEG
- Supporting the new Regional Strategy Committee, providing key strategic priorities for both Tertiary and FE portfolios going forward in response to Covid, as reflected in the current Crisis Management Plan
- Input to UHI's emerging response to regional economic recovery and strategy:
  - paper on economic recovery to Regional Strategy Committee
  - working with HIE, SFC and SDS on the new Regional Education and Skills Alignment Partnership
  - working with UHI Key Account Manager and VP FE in creating a coherent UHI input to local economic recovery partnerships, and developing a UHI response to up-and re-skilling
- Collaboration to input to SFC Review Phase 2 and UHI RSB evaluation response; this dovetails with Options Appraisal of 7 Academic Partners – developed strategic investment proposal for this which was endorsed by Partnership Council and Regional strategy Committee in November 2020.
- Collaboration with VPFE in SFC negotiations on credit guidance for H&I region, including FT, school and STEM activity
- External representation of UHI for college sector matters:
  - Member of High Level Ministerial Stakeholder Group for College and Universities (which meets every two weeks to address key Covid related issues for colleges and universities)
  - As co-chair for the National Articulation Forum, published the final report on Articulation and recommended actions in August 2020. Working with Colleges and Universities Scotland in implementation plan for the recommendations.
  - Co-lead of investigation into school-college partnerships, to be presented to Curriculum Advisory Board chaired by John Swinney (In December 2020)
  - College Principal lead for Poverty and deprivation – submitted consultation response on Fairer Scotland to the Social Renewal Advisory Board in October 2020; input to CDN research report on college sector role in tackling poverty and deprivation under way
  - College Principal Lead for Fair Access – submitted UHI response and collaborating with Colleges Scotland on sector response to Commissioner of Fair Access information requests regarding impact of Covid19 on Fair access in Nov 2020.

One of two College Principals interviewed by OECD Curriculum for Excellence Review Panel in early November 2020, which is part of the international evaluation of C4E in Scotland

[Significant events/ awards](#)

Co-chaired National Articulation Forum since December 2019; report published in August 2020.

[Collaboration with other academic partners](#)

The tertiary work is fully consultative and collaborative, as is all FE related regional activity; lead support of three workstreams in Crisis Management Plan

## Issues or concerns

Covid related sustainability of current workload within 0.5FTE role. The post is configured to work on a matrix basis and has no resource or staff attached to it outwith allocated project funding.

Pre-covid priority for curriculum mapping project and financial support is now required to be re-considered within post-covid financial environment.

## Vice-Principal Strategic Developments

Prepared by Gary Campbell

### Notable accomplishments

- Significant piece of work has begun on reviewing the curriculum – three groups have been formed, a Principal's group to help develop the overarching strategy, a data professionals group to collate the underlying information and a broad-based review group to consider the options and proposals in the round. The results of the review will be presented at Partnership Council at the beginning of February 2021.
- The Tay City Deal lead by Perth College UHI is now heading to Outline Business Case and in relation to this the project will be seeking Strategic Investment Funds via the F&GPC on 16<sup>th</sup> November to support the Professional Fees costs of the project.
- Argyll RGD progressing, heads of agreement have yet to be signed by the two governments (likely early 2021). We are involved in three strands: (i) Marine Industries Training Centre (Project Director in post), (ii) STEM Hubs – council to undertake an options appraisal and (iii) Skills agenda – support for new building in Dunoon for our activities is being discussed. In addition, funding for an International Seaweed and Shellfish Industry R&D Centre are being sought by SAMS with initial reactions being favorable
- The Moray Growth Deal (MGD), which will mean that two UHI projects Aviation/Technology (MAATIC) Hub and the Business Enterprise Hub are heading towards Outline Business Case stage hopefully to get agreement ahead of the elections. Strategic Investment Funding (SIF) in relation to the MAATIC project are being used in conjunction with HIE for planning and land acquisition
- Island Deal – reported elsewhere

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- All the above has been taken forward in close consultation and cooperation with academic partners.
- Significant interaction with SG, Boeing, HIE, US, SFC, ESP and others
- Discussion ongoing with Scottish Enterprise and Strathclyde University

### Issues or concerns

- The refocusing of efforts on Covid-19 responses to secure core business has made progress on the more externally facing and longer-term strategic developments such as the growth deals somewhat problematic.
- The views on how to carry out a curriculum review, what it is seeking to achieve and potentially on how the results will be implemented are wide ranging and various. The VP Strategic Development will seek to deliver what was agreed by both RSC and PC but will also incorporate ideas which come to light during the consultation process.

## Highland Theological College UHI

Prepared by Hector Morrison, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

- We started the new academic year with an online induction process for the first time. While we missed the face-to-face contact with new and returning students, there were aspects of this induction that we felt were more beneficial for students than what was offered previously, so we will be keeping these as part of our repertoire going forward, even when we return to something more akin to normality.
- We are pleased to note (particularly in this year of Covid) that our student numbers are slightly up on last year.
- We were delighted to discover recently that HTC's BA Theological Studies programme was one of only seven UHI programmes to receive a 100% overall satisfaction rating in the 2020 NSS results, and one of only three for which this was their second consecutive year with this rating. In addition, our programme came top of the Theology/ Religious Studies programmes in Scotland for Overall Satisfaction, coming ahead of the ancient Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh and St Andrews. The programme also came top of the table in terms of 'assessment and feedback.'

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Virtual Graduation Week – successful collaboration with Marketing and other APs to produce material, videos, listings for publishing etc.
- While missing the actual physical Graduation Ceremony for which there is no real substitute, it was quite impressive to see the P&J (and other papers) having a complete list of all UHI graduates together (including those taught through HTC). This would not normally happen due to the spread of graduation ceremonies over several months in UHI.

## Lews Castle College UHI

Prepared by Sue Macfarlane, Interim Principal and Chief Executive

### Notable accomplishments

**Student Engagement and Success:** Despite a lower level of response than normal to the early student experience survey, the level of student satisfaction remains high with 98% of FE and 93% of HE confirming that, overall, they are satisfied with their experience. Satisfaction rates were particularly high for learning and teaching and adaptations made against the pandemic. This reflects the hard work and efforts of all our staff to ensure students remain well supported during these challenging times.

The College has developed 2 new key strategies and plans for Gaelic and for Research, which lay out what we hope to achieve over the next 3 years in these important areas.

The campus redevelopment proposal submitted through the Islands' Deal has been positively received by Government and is progressing towards Heads of Terms.

The College is undertaking 2 Covid-related research projects; the first looking at the impact of the pandemic on local Gaelic-speaking communities and the second examining the impact of the lock-down on the level of medical self-referrals.

### Significant events/ awards

The College hosted a visit by Alasdair Allan, MSP for the Western Isles to look at how the College has adapted to the current Covid challenge and met construction students and discussed some of the challenges and opportunities for the college in the next few years.

The College has developed a series of engaging events and interactive sessions by staff and students as part of the UHI-wide virtual open week, including demonstrations, live music sessions and talks.

The BBC showcased the College's new Professional Cookery course this month, also filming at the College as part of the planned coverage of the University's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

The College continues to work with partners to deliver the Islands' Strategy, participating in the Islands Strategy Forum in October and contributing to funding bids to support curriculum development and delivery work. The College is one of the 7 academic partners collaborating on the proposed options appraisal to assess options for closer alignment.

## Moray College UHI

Prepared by David Patterson, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

The college responded at very short notice to the revised guidance from the SFC that full-time FE programmes in 20/21 should have a maximum of 16 credits rather than 18+. All our full-time programmes were reviewed and then the vast majority were put through the college's approvals and modifications quality assurance process in a matter of days to enable these revisions to be put in place as students joined for Semester 1.

These changes to curriculum have enabled the college to prioritise the delivery of socially-distanced practical sessions with smaller group sizes across the full range of its curriculum, and so to minimize the risk of students' failure to achieve these employment-related elements of their courses in the event of a future lockdown.

At the same time these credit changes have released college resource to design and delivery a wider range of short course provision to support economic recovery in Moray. In this quarter, the college has delivered support to those at risk of unemployment and those seeking to re-enter the labour market on a scale that would have previously been delivered in a full year.

The downside of this accomplishment has been reduced credits earned for full-time programmes and a change in the mix of delivery towards provision that requires greater resource and generates less per capita income.

### Significant events/ awards

The most significant event in this period has been the college and university graduation which followed agreed UHI protocols and sought to celebrate the achievement of our first ever cohorts to achieve their qualifications during a global pandemic lockdown. As in a 'normal' year, we celebrated achievement, outstanding effort and resilience, and progression into careers through both our printed and social media outlets.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

The online graduation activity was another great example of collaboration across partners and Executive Office functions at this time.

The continuation of regular twice-weekly meeting of the UHI 'Crisis Management Group' leaders from across the partnership has been an on-going example of how this partnership can and should be run.

### Issues or concerns

The SFC have supported financial stability by guaranteeing FE credit income over this 2020-22 'Emergency Years' period (SFC Review), to enable colleges to focus on doing the right things for our students at this time. Moray would therefore be very concerned if the SFC or Region sought to base any future changes in FE funding levels per partner based on credit activity in these years (particularly if Moray is the only partner to have followed SFC guidance in this matter).

NAFC Marine Centre UHI

Prepared by Willie Shannon, Director

#### Notable accomplishments

The annual survey of nearshore waters was completed at the end of October, despite a significant number of difficulties and challenges along the way. The 2020 survey showed promising results particularly in respect of whiting and haddock, following sampling of juvenile fish. The current survey results help to build on a data set that goes back over the past 10 years and the information which is contained in the data is of vital importance to Shetland's largest industry in planning its future.

#### Significant events/ awards

A new cadet access programme has been developed which is aimed at helping prospective candidates of the Merchant Navy Officer Cadet programme to get qualifications and experience for launching a career at sea. This will be a six-month programme offering both classroom and practical training that are relevant to marine careers. Two members of staff at NAFC have racked up 30 years continuous service with NAFC, their employment starting before the foundation stone of NAFC was laid; Lynne Henry, payroll manger and Fiona Tulloch, head of central support services were congratulated by NAFC Trustees on their significant contributions to NAFC, at the most recent board of trustees meeting.

#### Collaboration with other academic partners

The merger of NAFC with Shetland College and Train Shetland is progressing with a proposed vesting date for the new college at the start of the new academic year 21/22.

#### Issues or concerns

There are too many major pieces of work that are currently running across UHI where the various strands are not linked and staff resources are stretched in trying to cover the bases – these diverse and important pieces of work need to be streamlined and coordinated to give the best possible chance of positive outcomes.

## North Highland College UHI

Prepared by NHC Marketing

### Notable accomplishments

#### Principal of North Highland College retires

North Highland College UHI's Board of Management bade a fond farewell to Principal, Donald MacBeath, at its meeting on 23 September. Donald has been with the college for over 36 years and was Principal for the last six years. The board has established a recruitment panel to coordinate an open and transparent process to identify a new principal. The recruitment process will include staff, students and external stakeholders. Recruitment consultant Aspen, which has worked extensively with the university partnership, has been appointed to support the panel. The panel aims to identify a preferred candidate before the end of the year. In the meantime, the college's Director of Business Development, Debbie Murray, has been appointed as Interim Principal.

#### College holds virtual Graduation

Despite us not being able to celebrate the achievements of our students in the traditional format this year, the College Graduation Team worked alongside our UHI partners to develop an online resource to help show our appreciation for our graduates efforts wc 28th September.

The site featured; a video message from Donald; recognition of our students of the year and additional prize winners; a list of all graduates; and a message from Tia Cannop, our HISA representative. As well as our own college's contributions, the site also featured messages from our Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal and the Principal and Vice Chancellor of UHI, Crichton Lang.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

Congratulations to our ERI staff on receiving recognition as part of the 'One Health Breakthrough Partnership' which has been highly commended for their work at the 2020 British Medical Journal Healthcare Awards Ceremony.

The 'One Health Breakthrough Partnership' involving our own Environmental Research Institute, NHS Highland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Water, HIE and the James Hutton Institute, is tackling the environmental impact of healthcare activities including the risk to water pollution from the use of pharmaceuticals.

Director of ERI, Stuart Gibb, said "this recognition underlines the value of partnership working toward addressing complex issues that cut across organisational and disciplinary boundaries. It also given us confidence that good healthcare and environmental stewardship can be practiced and promoted together."

## Orkney College UHI

Prepared by OC UHI Marketing on behalf of Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin, Principal

#### Notable accomplishments

- 14 Sept Prof Donna Heddle assists with production of durable anti-covid facemasks by offering expertise on viking technology: <https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/black-isle-weaver-looks-to-viking-technology-for-anti-covid-face-mask-212187/>
- Sept: Dr Oisin Plumb had book published as part of INS' 'North Atlantic World' series: [http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod\\_id=IS-9782503583471-1](http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503583471-1)
- Sept: Prof Edward Abbott-Halpin has book 'Public Library Governance' published: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/title/525295>
- 1 Oct Dr Andrew Jennings appeared on BBC Alba as part of Gaelic/Icelandic production 'The far traveller' (An Taistealaiche): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000n1tp>
- 3 Oct Dr Alex Sanmark was a guest on BBC Radio Scotland's 'Good Morning Scotland' discussing the role of women in viking age society: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000n467> (at 9:55)
- 4 Oct Dr Ragnhild Ljosland reflects on Orkney's witchcraft heritage in the press: <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/18766703.new-evidence-emerges-orkneys-controversial-witch-trials/>

#### Significant events/ awards

- 3 Sep Archaeology Institute student's research reveals previously unknown information about Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site, Maeshowe <https://www.orkney.uhi.ac.uk/news/upside-down-houses-for-the-dead-at-maeshowe.html>
- 25 Sept hosted local special award winners presentation: <https://www.orkney.uhi.ac.uk/students/useful-information/annual-graduation-and-awards-ceremony/special-award-winners/> Press release: <https://www.orkney.uhi.ac.uk/news/orkney-college-uhi-special-awards-2020.html>
- 29 Sept Orkney College student Gary Lloyd named as UHI Student of the year: <https://www.orkney.uhi.ac.uk/news/archaeology-student-makes-it-two-years-in-a-row-for-orkney-college-uhi-.html>
- 5 Oct Liam McArthur MSP raised parliamentary motion to congratulate Gary Lloyd: <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-22869>

## Perth College UHI

Prepared by Margaret Cook, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

- Nov Open Week w/c 23 Nov
- Launch of UHI-wide 2021-22 student recruitment campaign

### Significant events/ awards

Award of one of the strategic projects relating to COVID-19 impacts in the Highlands and Islands (see below): Co-PI from Perth College UHI

### Collaboration with other academic partners

Involvement in two strategic projects relating to COVID-19 impacts in the Highlands and Islands:

- Community-determined change-scapes of recovery: Case studies across the Highlands and Islands of the Impact of and strategies for recovery from the COVID19 pandemic – PIs Vicky Johnson and Ros Bryce – APs involved – PC/IC/ OC/WHC/NHC. Value £100K
- Developing Post COVID resilience capacity for families – PI Malcolm Clark – APs involved MC/PC/OC/AC. Value £20K

- Joint supervision of 2 PhD students at Inverness College UHI.

- Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research (West Highland College UHI): NPA SCITOUR project

- Nov Open Week w/c 23 Nov
- Launch of UHI-wide 2021-22 student recruitment campaign

### Issues or concerns

- The forum 'Challenging Upland Futures', planned for 1-2 September 2020 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Centre for Mountain Studies, has been further postponed until 5-6 October 2021.

## Sabhal Mor Ostaig UHI

Prepared by Gillian Rothach, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

- Increase in student numbers, both in HE and FE access courses
- Safe opening of the campus to students, to student-facing staff and to essential workers in September
- Excellent relationship and cooperation with SMO students regarding compliance with Covid policies
- Progress towards the finish line for REF 2021 submission
- Launch of semester on-line research seminars, with attendance from across the UK, Ireland, and internationally.

### Significant events/ awards

- SMO on-line celebration of graduates' achievements, October
- Medal success of a SMO student in the on-line Gaelic Mòd, 2020

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Delivery of Gaelic degrees in SMO and Lews Castle through the Gaelic and Related Studies Programme
- MA (Hons) Gaelic and Education degree, in partnership with UHI (Prof Morag Redford)

### Issues or concerns

- As one of the few small specialist organisations in the UHI partnership, and working entirely through the medium of Gaelic, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig seeks a different relationship with UHI to those larger, less specialist, UHI Academic Partners who wish to align themselves more closely and who seek shared service provision.

## SAMS UHI

Prepared by Dr Anuschka Miller / Euan Paterson

### Notable accomplishments

- SAMS UHI led the second research cruise to leave the UK since lockdown in March. The cruise to the north-east Atlantic required crew to quarantine and isolate while aboard. Covid restrictions also meant the team completed their tasks with only half the usual number of scientists on board. The research focused on climate change and ocean currents.
- In a world first, SAMS UHI staff, in partnership with NatureScot, successfully hatched and released a flapper skate, an endangered species that can still be found off Scotland's west coast, where it is protected. It took 18 months in the SAMS aquarium for the egg to hatch!
- SAMS UHI purchased an electric car and has been awarded funding for installation of a 130 kW solar PV array on our roof as part of a new environmental management plan.
- Launch of £5.5M AGRI-SATT project supporting the development of the largest natural micro-algae growth ponds in the world – based in Africa - to become zero-emission and fully automated.

### Significant events/ awards

- 29 new first year students started on the BSc (Hons) Marine Science programme (of which 10 are from EU countries) and 18 on the MSc Aquaculture, Environment & Society (from 11 countries). All teaching is delivered online.
- First successful virtual open day, comprising a live panel session with staff and student reps.
- SAMS passed a stringent examination of its health and safety and environmental management procedures to gain International Standards Organisation (ISO) 14001:2015 standard for environmental management and ISO45001: 2018 standard for health & safety.
- Our Culture Collection of Algae and Protozoa won a total of £680k capital investment from NERC to expand its genomics and bioinformatics capabilities, facilities for scaling up algal production and to add new analytical equipment to their national capability.
- Joined by new Head of Enterprise (Mike Spain) and Head of Finance (Patricia McGill)
- Funding award to expand our seaweed nursery

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Co-created online graduation portal including a SAMS page with a video welcome. keynote speech and congratulatory poem. 40 students graduated: 22 UG, 10 MSc, 1 MRes, 7 PhD
- New book chapter published between SAMS, ERI and UHI staff
- Multiple funding applications developed / submitted eg with ERI, IC and others
- Collaborative field work on underwater noise between SAMS and ERI
- Continued Bryden Centre research with SAMS, ERI, IC, PC and NAFC partners
- Ongoing collaboration with NAFC developing an MSc Aquaculture proposal

### Issues or concerns

- Financial sustainability post-Brexit

## Shetland College UHI

Prepared by Jane Lewis

### Notable accomplishments

Successful student recruitment cycle for HE students (numbers increased by 5% on last year).

Ongoing support for apprenticeship completion and recruitment of 75% of target despite COVID challenges.

Completion of Strategic Outline Business Case (with NAFC) for Redevelopment of Shetland Campuses as one of the Islands Deal Projects submitted for government consideration.

Appointment of Chair for Transition Board and establishment of the sub-committee structure

### Significant events/ awards

Online graduation with UHI PG award to Ashleigh Slater and SC awards to Rosalynd Mair and Jack Scaife.

Fine art student Elaine Thomason won this year's Jamieson & Smith Competition for a piece of art inspired by the wool-broker company's premises or products. <https://jamiesonandsmith.wordpress.com/2020/10/06/shetland-college-project-2020/>.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

Establishment of joint committee working with NAFC over the coming period as part of preparation for merger.

Ongoing collaboration with other partners (particularly Islands partners) on preparation of Islands Deal projects.

### Issues or concerns

Ongoing concern for staff and student wellbeing in face of continuing pressure of new ways of working.

## West Highland College UHI

Prepared by Lydia Rohmer, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

#### **Covid 19 Management – Safe start to Academic Year 2020-21**

The college has successfully recruited and inducted its full-time FE and HE student cohort for AY 2020-21, including over 500 school pupils attending school college programs. 50% of school pupils attend the innovative and highly successful Highland Virtual School, which has been co-created with Highland college and local authority partners over the last few years. The college collaborated with UHI EDU and a number of academic partners in creating a new online student induction process and course. Safe campus preparations have been effective, with no known on campus Covid-19 transmissions. A single positive Covid case in the Fort William student residences at the end of September was contained, with no further cases reported. Practical courses continued to be delivered in a Covid-safe environment, with all other courses delivered remotely through blended active learning in virtual classrooms. Although KPIs for AY2019-20 are to be formally confirmed, the college is expecting another highly successful year of student attainment. The early student satisfaction survey for all students indicates very high levels of student satisfaction with induction and student experience, including adaptation of courses to Covid-safe delivery and student support arrangements.

#### **Graduation Celebrations for Class of 2020**

The college collaborated with academic partners across UHI in a highly successful online celebration of the success of the class of 2020 <https://www.thinkuhi.com/graduates2020/whc.html>, including course students of the year and industry award winners <https://www.whc.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/west-highland/students/graduation/Student-Awards.pdf>, and overall students of the year: HE student of the year Alexandra McKeown (HNC Social Services), and FE student of the year Edward Mowles (NQ Maritime and Aquaculture Skills). Edward was also named UHI FE Student of the Year, with his remarkable and inspirational learner journey being reported in a number of national newspapers.

<https://www.whc.uhi.ac.uk/news/congratulations-to-our-students-of-the-year.html>

#### **Research**

- Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research (CRTR) has commenced a new ERASMUS + project (called T-CRISIS NAV) on 1 September 2020, developing CPD and curriculum modules to help Tourism SMEs navigate their way through crisis. This three-year project is led by CRTR with partners in Ireland, Denmark, Iceland, Spain and Germany.
- Approval of another crisis-related project approved, due to start November 2020: "Community-determined change-scapes of recovery: Case studies across the Highlands and Islands of the impact and strategies for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." This is a collaborative UHI AP project funded through the SFC Uplift funding, involving the Environmental Research Institute, the Centre for Sustainable Communities, the Institute for Northern Studies and the Centre for Mountain Studies.
- Creative consultants have been appointed in October to deliver the major ERDF project 'The Coast that Shaped the World' <https://www.whc.uhi.ac.uk/news/creative-consultants-help-deliver-maritime-heritage-project-.html>
- School of Adventure Staff: Tamara Griffiths has achieved her Doctor of Philosophy from University of Malta in November (Thesis title: Contemporary Mediterranean Foragers in the Apennine Mountain Area, Central Italy); Michelle Smith and Deb Pinner are currently completing PhDs in 2020-21 at UWS and UoAberdeen.

#### **Innovation and Knowledge Exchange**

- Advancing Manufacturing in the West Highlands; this is one of 12 national projects under the national Advancing Manufacturing Challenge Fund (ERDF). Total project value - £1.6M over 2.5 years. The college has signed the lease for Ocean Frontier (part of the former Underwater Centre) building in Fort William, and is currently competing building works and equipment procurement to create a new Advanced Manufacturing Hub. Margaret Weir, a highly experienced Mechanical and Project Engineer currently working with Atkins is joining the project as Project Manager in November 2020. A highly successful major employer awareness raising event was held through the Lochaber Chamber of Commerce in September, with over 50 employers in attendance.
- The college is due to launch its new iSTEM project in partnership with Highland Council to over 180 primary schools. Led by Dr Sarah Morton, Project Manager Digital and STEM
- The college is expanding its delivery of workbased learning to aquaculture industry, including MOWI, Scottish Salmon, and Scottish Seafarms. This includes collaboration with other Aps through the UHI Apprenticeship Hub.

#### **Other**

- The college continues to co-deliver with DYW West Highland and major industry partners a series of innovative online career webinars. Events in this period covered Aquaculture, Adventure and Outdoor tourism, Construction and Health/Social Care.
- Rachel Walker, Course Leader in Music, adjudicated the US National Mod in early November she has been nominated as Gaelic Singer of the Year in the National Trad Awards Scotland and is launching her new album in December.
- College Online Open Day – successful event held on 5 November with focus on School of adventure studies; the college is participating in UHI Online Open Week from 23-26 November.
- The college is pursuing an Options Appraisal together with 6 rural and island UHI academic partners.
- Principal part of UHI Principal/Vice Chancellor Recruitment Panel

#### **Issues or concerns**

- Covid-related future sustainability; capacity to sustain multiple strategic change work streams

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Committee</b>  | University Court   |
| <b>Subject</b>  | Academic Partner Quarterly Status Updates  |
| <b>Action requested</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For information only   |
| <b>Brief summary of the paper</b>   | Update reports for period covering 01 December 2020 – 28 February 2021. The SMT element that used to make up this report has now been developed into a separate paper (also on the Court agenda).<br>No reports were received from Argyll, SMO, NAFC, or Perth College. Perth College UHI reported that workload pressures meant they were unable to provide a report. |
| <b>Resource implications</b><br>(If yes, please provide details)  | No<br>Click or tap here to enter text.   |
| <b>Risk implications</b><br>(If yes, please provide details)  | Yes<br>Issues/ concerns captured in paper. Perth College UHI reported that workload pressures meant they were unable to provide a report this quarter.   |
| <b>Date paper prepared</b>  | 09/03/2021   |
| <b>Date of committee meeting</b>  | 17/03/2020   |
| <b>Author</b>   | AP Principals  |
| <b>Link with strategy</b>   | Information sharing  |
| <b>Equality and diversity</b>   | No   |
| Does this activity/ proposal require an Equality Impact Assessment?   | If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>Data Protection</b>  | No   |
| Does this activity/ proposal require a Data Protection Impact Assessment?   | If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>Island communities</b><br>Does this activity/ proposal have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities)? | No<br>If yes, please give details: Click or tap here to enter text.  |
| <b>Status</b> (e.g. confidential)   | Non-confidential   |
| <b>Freedom of information</b>   | Open   |
| <b>Consultation</b>   | Described in paper   |

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Highland Theological College UHI

Prepared by Hector Morrison, Principal

**Notable accomplishments**

- HTC lecturer and PhD supervisor Rev Dr Bruce Ritchie had his second book published recently. The details are T.F. Torrance in *Recollection and Reappraisal* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021).
- HTC VP (Academic) and lecturer in Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew led the Postgraduate Seminar at Edinburgh Theological Seminary on 23 Feb, 2021, presenting a paper that was based on his earlier publication: Grant, Jamie A., 'The Psalter, Worldview and Worship', in Don Collett, Mark Elliott, Mark Gignilliat and Ephraim Radner (eds.), *The Identity of Israel's God in Scripture* (RBS 96; Atlanta, SBL Press: 2020), pp. 131–42.

## Inverness College UHI

Prepared by Marketing Team

### Notable accomplishments

As Court will be aware, SMT proposed a FRP to its Board in January 2020, with three main elements: review of fixed term contracts/end; introduction of a voluntary severance scheme; introduction of an alternatives to redundancy scheme. This work coincided with changes to financial management and culture. The FRP was approved in April 2020. From this work, we have reversed our financial position by around £1 million from a budgeted deficit of -£940,000 to an anticipated positive of £170,000. The FRP has also delivered £1.6m of net/recurrent savings. Major changes include the closure of our Early Learning Childcare Centre, which was no longer financially viable (we have ensured continuity of childcare on site for staff/students by leasing our building to an alternative provider). The FRP was officially closed by the Board in December 2020. A restructure of SMT is now underway, which will result in additional savings. In launching our FRP earlier than many, we will enter 2021/23 with flat and achievable budgets and the ability to focus on the impacts of COVID and Brexit. Our VSS and Alternatives to Redundancy Scheme remain open until 31.3.2021.

### Significant events/ awards

- The former Inverness College UHI campus site on Longman Road, Inverness, has been placed on the market.
- The business competition was launched by our CREATE team in November 2020, with a closing date for entries of Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March.
- Work by The Rivers and Lochs Institute on the fragmentation of Scottish rivers formed part of a study published in world leading science Journal, Nature, in December 2020.
- Jacques Fiette, a Scottish School of Forestry student, won the Tillhill Award for best New Planting Application following a report he prepared as part of his coursework.
- NC Art and Design students celebrated UN Human Rights Day with an open-air exhibition of their work at Inverness Campus in December.
- Students once again supported families in need over the festive period by cooking meals for the Gateway project.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Inverness College UHI continues to be proactive in dealing with financial pressures. We now share a finance service with our partners at North Highland College UHI and are looking to build on this through the exploration of more share services with partners, including health and safety, estates and procurement.
- Inverness College UHI, North Highland College UHI and West Highland College UHI have been working collaboratively to promote the new Senior Phase programme in Highland. This work included creation of a new Highland Senior Phase collaborative web platform.

### Issues or concerns

#### SQA Exams

*We have been working hard to provide reassurance and support to our National 5 and Higher students, with some continuing to face uncertainty over assessments. The University partnership has already submitted its response to the handling to SQA. We anticipate having to potentially bring students onto campus for on-site assessments in some areas. We continue to liaise with SQA over requirements.*

#### COVID-19

We have taken a cautious and controlled approach to re-opening our campus buildings to ensure all the necessary risk assessments and health and safety protocols were reviewed and updated. As such, we've taken a phase approach.

- Phase one of re-opening will see a small number of students return for face-to-face teaching from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March (2.5% of daily roll)
- Phase two of re-opening will see more students return to campus from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March (5% of daily roll)
- Phase three of reopening will see more students return after Easter in line with emerging guidance from the Scottish Government.

In particular, the reopening enables us try and clear the backlog in practical activities in construction and engineering. We are reviewing the impact on the numbers of new students we can enrol in these areas next year.

#### Student Recruitment

Credits are still to be generated for some students on deferred courses due to COVID-19 and it is expected further FE enrolments will take place throughout the year, including Modern Apprentices and commercial courses, however it is not expected that we will meet our credit target.

## Lews Castle College UHI

Prepared by Sue Macfarlane, Interim Principal and Chief Executive

### Notable accomplishments

The College has been able to continue to allow restricted access for study on campus despite the spike of Covid cases in the Outer Hebrides since Christmas.

The College's new Curriculum Strategy was approved in February and will help repurpose the college curriculum to ensure it is aligned more closely to the economic and social needs of the area and achievement of student number targets. This aligns closely with the College's new Research and Gaelic strategies approved earlier.

### Significant events/ awards

The College launched a series of Thursday night live ceilidhs as part of its new digital marketing strategy. These have been highlighting our music courses and bringing together some of the most well-known names in Scottish music and Gaelic from across Scotland.

A fully Gaelic-speaking on-line event is planned for the end of February to launch the College's new Gaelic Strategy and Plan. This will be attended by a wide range of community groups and agencies.

This month, Alasdair Allan MSP raised a motion in Scottish Government in respect of the Uist Virtual Archaeology App (UVAP) development being led by the College's Archeology team.

The College hosted an alumni exhibition at Taigh Chearsabhagh in north Uist celebrating 10 years of arts graduates from LCC UHI, which was featured in The Herald newspaper.

The BA Applied Music team were nominated for a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence Award this month.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

The College continues to work with partners on a number of significant developments:

- UHI Islands Strategy – contributing to the Islands' Forum in February
- Islands Deal proposals
- UHI Gaelic Plan – working to scope our approach to a revised plan

Academic Partner Alignment Options Appraisal – working to progress work towards the final report on options in April

### Issues or concerns

The lack of payment of the Distant Islands Allowance continues to cause concern as a contributor to the financial sustainability of the College.

## Moray College UHI

Prepared by David Patterson, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

Teaching and support staff have continued delivery to our students during the post-Christmas lockdown period with increasing dedication and ingenuity. Our Hospitality team delivered custom packs to students with all the ingredients and equipment they needed to continue their studies at home – this involved 15 hours of weighing, sorting and packing circa 2,500 labelled packets with 3 drivers covering 250 miles across Moray. More Amazing than Amazon...

### Significant events/ awards

- Our first fully online Degree Show for the BA (Hons) Fine Art programmes was run in partnership with Art North Projects from 16 December to 22 January. Around 6,000 unique visitors attended the show digitally which celebrated the work of graduating students from Moray, Lews Castle and Shetland
- Lorna McNee, HNC Professional Cookery graduate, won her first Michelin star just five months into her first head chef role at Cail Bruich in Glasgow - Glasgow's first Michelin star in 18 years
- Our Acting and Theatre Performance students and graduates worked with our partners from the *Out of the Darkness Theatre Company* to produce a DVD of *Dick McWhittington* to fill that panto-shaped hole in our lives over the Christmas break

The college's senior team and Chair and Vice Chair of the Board were delighted to welcome our new VC for very constructive first virtual meetings to discuss successes and opportunities in Moray, as well of the challenges we face around strategy, finance and culture

### Collaboration with other academic partners

The college is currently working on an increasing number of small research projects funded by SFC Innovation Vouchers or Covid-19 Research uplift funding, often in collaboration with academic partners or university Centres. Clients include:

- New Arc (developing a wildlife management system using cutting edge research on case-based reasoning and/or machine learning)
- EPIT (developing an HV Power Generation and Synchronisation Simulator tool for teaching the workings of generators on oil rigs)
- Children 1st (designing and implementing a secure mental health Visualisation Administration and Data Platform)
- Mesomorphic (developing a game system to support the practising of mental arithmetic)

Rural Housing Scotland (developing an innovative bespoke video streaming software platform that can be used for virtual consultations on housing projects)

### Issues or concerns

At the moment, mainly viruses, real or virtual...

## North Highland College UHI

Prepared by NHC Marketing

## Notable accomplishments

- North Highland College UHI have been awarded the highest level of assurance after undergoing an audit of their COVID-19 safety arrangements.
- '**validating surface currents at offshore renewable energy sites**' -project underway led by ERI, with Swansea and Bangor universities, funded by Supergen Offshore Renewable Energy Hub (ESPRC).
- '**Pharmaceuticals in Scotland's water environment**' – CREW Hydro Nations funding \_joint report by the ERI, Glasgow Caledonian University, and the James Hutton Institute  
<https://www.crew.ac.uk/publication/pharmaceuticals-water-environment-baseline-assessment-and-recommendations>
- **SHOT-SWITCH** –ERI + University of Cambridge led collaboration investigating lead traces in game.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56158777>

## Significant events/ awards

- **Hydro Nation Scholars Programme 2021** – 4yr PhD awarded to ERI (Oct 21) - *Innovative brash management to enhance water quality following peatland restoration and forestry operations*
- 'Carbon Cycling in Ombrotrophic Peatland Pool System" - INTERACT- Transnational Access funding to support collaborative work in Mukrhino Field station, Siberia

## Collaboration with other academic partners

- **Change Scapes** project – COVID impact challenge fund\_ community-based research with Perth/ Orkney/ West Highland and Inverness colleges to learn from COVID response in communities
- **Sustainable Aviation Test Environment** Project – UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, led by HIAL. ERI & ETEC working with Perth College- UHI and local business
- An exploration of the Flow Country's "Heritage from below" - **MRes jointly supervised** by UHI's Centre for History and the ERI

## Issues or concerns

- Continuing delays to field based research and Laboratory analysis as result of COVID, particularly in relation to PGR student progress

## Orkney College UHI

Prepared by OC UHI Marketing on behalf of Professor Edward Abbott-Halpin, Principal

#### Notable accomplishments

- 1 Dec: collaborative project between Orkney College and the St Magnus Way: [News Archive - 2020 - Words on the Way: A Literary Pilgrimage \(uhi.ac.uk\)](#)
- 19 Jan: 3<sup>rd</sup> food donation made to local foodbank: [News - Orkney College donates surplus food to those who need it most during crisis- Orkney College UHI](#)
- 22 Jan: 'Ness of Brodgar' book best seller: [Ness of Brodgar book a best-seller with second print run under way – Archaeology Orkney](#)
- 4 Feb: Prof. Donna Heddle provides an insight into the history of university education in Scotland and the creation of the UHI partnership in press & journal column: [Professor Donna Heddle: Highland university a long time coming | Press and Journal](#)

#### Significant events/ awards

- First of its kind hydrogen training course offered by Orkney College Maritime department: [News - Orkney Leading the Way with Hydrogen Seafarer Training- Orkney College UHI](#)
- Gained good press coverage of this story – top story on the Scottish Renewables Daily Briefing, it was in the LGiU briefing, covered in the P&J, a great interview from Mark Shiner aired on Radio Orkney and featured in The Orcadian too, as well as gaining a great reaction across social media.

#### Collaboration with other academic partners

- 18 Jan: New book 'Between Islands' features chapters by Prof Donna Heddle & Dr Andrew Jennings [Between Islands Project - An Lanntair](#)
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## SAMS UHI

Prepared by Euan Paterson, SAMS

### Notable accomplishments

- The Culture Collection for Algae and Protozoa (CCAP) has been recommended for certification of ISO9001:2015 following a two-part assessment.
- CCAP ran a three-day training course in biotechnology for 60 international participants from as far afield as Israel, India and South Africa.
- Profs Elizabeth Cottier-Cook and Michele Stanley appointed to European Expert Working Group on macroalgae culture.

News story on blue whales research by Dr Susannah Calderon covered by numerous international outlets.

### Significant events/ awards

- Christine Campbell, Head of the CCAP, awarded MBE in New Years Honours List.
- SAMS part of IDCORE programme won Contribution to Skills Award at Scottish Green Energy Awards.
- Prof Michael Burrows marked 30 years with SAMS in February 2021.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

- Graphic designer Iona Harvey produced factsheet for university's renewable energy services.
- In January we hosted a staff seminar given by Dr Joseph Onoufriou (UHI) on 'How seals use the three dimensional space of strong tidal currents'.

### Issues or concerns

Managing delays, caused by Covid-19, in the delivery of externally-funded projects, particularly PhDs.

## Shetland College UHI

Prepared by Jane Lewis

### Notable accomplishments

Ability to continue to support students were possible with campus access and through remote delivery. Anticipate at this time small numbers of students will not complete due to direct impact of current restrictions in place.

Shetland UHI has achieved charitable status. Board development continues with a focus on setting up systems and processes to allow achievement of assigned status in a timely fashion. There has been successful recruitment of new Board Directors and two members of staff are seconded to the organisation.

### Significant events/ awards

Staff Development Conference, providing time for staff to consolidate and meet within their teams, alongside some upskills CPD opportunities.

Engagement with Schools remotely to promote school link programmes

The BA(Hons) Fine Art course at Shetland College hosted its inaugural degree show.

### Collaboration with other academic partners

Ongoing activity across Shetland College and NAFC Marine Centre preparing for the coming merger. Development of draft Joint Research and KE strategy for the new College. Completed agreement for further joint committees. Workstreams in all major areas begun.

Centre for Islands Creativity successful reapproval of MA in Art and Social Practice. Submission of Proposal to award practice-led research degrees in the Arts.

### Issues or concerns

Ongoing concern for staff and student wellbeing in face of continuing restricted College access and uncertainty of present situation. Particularly difficult when assessment methodologies of completion of students not yet fully known. Also difficult for administrative staff who are being requested by multiple external agencies for data, often at short notice.

Increasing concern for timely completion of students especially the impact on practical courses.

## West Highland College UHI

Prepared by Lydia Rohmer, Principal

### Notable accomplishments

#### Covid 19 Management – Ongoing challenges

The college continues to engage with both UHI Crisis Management Group and in Colleges Scotland sector working groups to manage the ongoing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, to assure continued engagement in learning for all of our learners. This has led to the establishment of a new UHI Covid-satellite testing centre for the College in December 2020, assisting students who were changing term time addresses over the Christmas holidays; since start of January 2021 lockdown, this has focused on maintaining remote learning in the dynamically evolving Covid lockdown rules for colleges and universities. Contribution to the requirements of multiple taskforces, sector working groups and Scottish Government to plan for completion of student learning during this academic year, with college staff working almost exclusively from home in lockdown conditions, has been a challenge to college capacity. Attention has therefore been on both student and staff health and wellbeing initiatives, with agreed approaches and resources in place. Despite these challenges, the college is seeking to meet its FE credit target by end of this academic year, and is focused on facilitating completion of all learners this academic session where this is in the college's control.

#### Research

- [Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research \(CRTR\)](#) has secured a new ERASMUS + project in January 2021 to support **Youth Entrepreneurship in Mountain Areas**, leading work with partners in Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Denmark and Greece.
- A new website and national engagement project to collect stories related to the West Coast has been launched for the major ERDF project **'The Coast that Shaped the World'** [Coast That Shaped The World](#)
- The first newsletter for the 'Storytagging' project has been launched under the title 'Northword'
- Sara Mair-Bellshaw left the college at the end for February 2021 to become Chief Executive of the new spin-off company created - Slow Adventure Ltd.
- School of Adventure Studies completed their innovation voucher on Inclusive Adventure and are looking to develop a follow-up project.
- The college has secured a new innovation voucher in February 2021, delivering a sustainable construction project with Skye based organization Climavore CLC.

#### Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

- Advancing Manufacturing in the West Highlands; this is one of 12 national projects under the national Advancing Manufacturing Challenge Fund (ERDF). Total project value - £1.6M over 2.5 years. The college is currently undertaking capital works on the new Ocean Frontier building to house the £1M resource centre for business which will form the core of the new Advanced Manufacturing Hub. The building is set to open by May, subject to Covid rules. Margaret Weir, a highly experienced Mechanical and Project Engineer formerly with Atkins, has joined the project and is working with businesses to help develop manufacturing capacity and new products.
- The college is due to launch its new iSTEM project in partnership with Highland Council to over 180 primary schools. Led by Dr Sarah Morton, Project Manager Digital and STEM
- The college is expanding its delivery of workbased learning to aquaculture industry, including MOWI, Scottish Salmon, and Scottish Seafarms, as well as transport and logistics with Ferguson Transport.
- Staff from the School of Adventure Studies were instrumental in UHI becoming a partner in the national marine tourism strategy 'Giant Steps' which was launch in Scottish Parliament in February 2021. Annabel Laurence presented at the parliamentary launch.

#### Other

- The college has continues to work with UHI partners on joint marketing and communications campaigns, including Virtual Open Day events and single focus themes and campaigns.
- The college has collaborated with North Highland and Inverness Colleges as well as EO Marketing (Schools) staff to create a major new resource for Highland schools. [Highland Senior Phase - University of the Highlands and Islands \(uhi.ac.uk\)](#) This incorporates delivery of the Highland Virtual School, an initiative the college has led on for several years.
- Rachel Walker, Course Leader in Music, performed in the recent Celtic Connections Festival in January 2021.
- Pete Holmes, the college's rural skills tutor for many years, was awarded Best Rural Skills Educator Award 2020 from the Scottish Rural Awards in January 2021.
- Katy McDonald, course leader Supported Learning Programmes, published an article in CDN's Reach magazine, outlining digital technology interventions designed to support students with profound and complex needs during Covid19. Katy also presented her findings at CDN's Virtual Bridge seminars.
- A number of staff, including Fiona Grant and Lesley Hawkins, presented on WHC's use of technology to engage learners.
- School of Adventure Studies Alumna Mikayla Parton received the Scottish Youth Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture [Mikayla Parton - Scottish Youth Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture on Vimeo](#)
- The college is pursuing an Options Appraisal together with 6 rural and island UHI academic partners to investigate strategic change options. The college is working with UHI and consultants Rockborn Management LTD to deliver a final report on 19 April 2021 for further consideration.
- The college is actively collaborating with NHS Highland and HIE on securing investment in the new Belford hospital development and STEM Centre on the Blar Mor in Fort William, including engaging in two major benefits realization studies to be published in April 2021.