

Access and Inclusion Strategy



Tertiary Education Sector Shetland
Find your way to jobs and university

You can't learn unless you're present and you can't be present unless you're able to get there. Access to a quality education should not be dependent on where you live or who you are.

Our Access and Inclusion Strategy details how we will work to ensure that we are both accessible and inclusive in our approach to delivering learning in Shetland. The landscape of education and training is changing with increasing demand for flexible and inclusive provision. Therefore, it is essential that the Tertiary Education Sector in Shetland is similarly dynamic in order to meet the needs of the Shetland community – ensuring that we put the learner at the heart of our services.

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1) Who we are

NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College UHI and Train Shetland will work together to help build the future of Shetland through education, training and research.

We are the most northern partners of the University of the Highlands and Islands and we deliver learning opportunities throughout the Shetland Community.

Our strategic goals are to:

- 1) Respond to the needs of Shetland
- 2) Deliver high quality learning experiences and successful outcomes for all learners
- 3) Carry out high quality research
- 4) Provide high quality governance, leadership and management structures
- 5) Grow our business
- 6) Build sustainability.

Shetland is thriving with low employment and a buoyant local economy supported by local traditional industries such as textiles and fishing as well as more recent large scale developments in oil and gas which are in turn supported by local commercial support services. The Tertiary Education Sector in Shetland is crucial in supporting local industry and in ensuring that our local workforce have the skills and training to ensure we continue to thrive and develop our island community in the years to come.

NAFC Marine Centre UHI

The NAFC Marine Centre is an educational and scientific institute, located in Scalloway. The Centre delivers training and education, carries our research and development, and provides consultancy, advisory and other services for the maritime industries. Facilities include our Full Mission Bridge Simulator, Research Laboratories as well as vessels to support research, surveying and training as

well as engineering facilities and state of the art classrooms. Find out more www.nafc.uhi.ac.uk

Shetland College UHI

We offer courses in Business, Hospitality and Events; Computing; Community Learning and Essential Skills; Creative Industries; Health and Care as well as Culture and Heritage. Our main campus in Lerwick includes a Library, training kitchen, construction workshop, textiles facilitation unit plus much more. We also deliver courses in Learning Centres situated in more remote locations as well as Mareel, the state of the art Cinema and Music Venue. Find out more www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk

Train Shetland

We manage Modern Apprenticeships across a wide range of companies throughout Shetland. Our support to applicants ranges from school leavers through to adults looking for skills-based employment with training. We are committed to providing a wide range of training to meet local workforce needs. Our accredited training courses are delivered throughout the year and we can develop bespoke courses to meet specific local need. Find out more www.trainshetland.com

2) Background

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) undertook a review of Extended Learning Support in 2015-16 and from this new guidance was issued in relation to the development of College Outcome Agreements.

The Highlands and Islands Further Education Regional Board agreed a move from the previous Extended Learning Support (ELS) to the Access and Inclusion Fund, with each of its constituent colleges to complete their own strategies which would align to this.

In making the transition it must be acknowledged that colleges have differed greatly in what was claimed as ELS activity. Analysis undertaken by SFC for local authority areas from 2002 through to 2014 indicated that ELS activity relating to students from Shetland was the lowest in Scotland when measured as a percentage of SUMs claimed or on the basis of student enrolments. This is important to note when looking forward and in consideration of funding allocation for the current academic session (2017-18). The amount allocated was £116,472 and the need to review the range and depth of inclusive services is crucial when moving forward. It is therefore necessary to clarify the current resourced provision and engage our students and staff in planning for the future.

We must ensure that funds are used to ensure all students achieve their personal learning outcomes. These funds will ensure that we continue to develop inclusive practice across areas with a direct or indirect impact on students.

We are proud that our current curriculum provides clear progression routes through a number of subject areas greatly enhancing opportunities for learners to gain appropriate level knowledge and skills in order to progress to the next level of study or into www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk/publications

employment. Furthermore, in the design of National Certificate Courses, core skills are built into the frameworks to ensure that learners are being provided with the opportunity to gain the relevant level of core skills to either access employment or progress onto the next level of study. This increases the opportunities for positive destinations for learners and further enhances the learner's personal development.

Our approaches to delivery are flexible to take account of and meet individual learning needs. Our staff monitor progression on activity and adapt the learning environment whenever possible. This increases learner engagement and overall learner retention and attainment.

Our Access and Inclusion Strategy applies to all learners and takes account of a range of policies, including:

- Shetland Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming 2017
- Shetland College UHI / NAFC Marine Centre UHI Corporate Parenting Plans
- 10-year Plan to attract people to live, study, work and invest in Shetland
- Shetland Skills Investment Plan
- Developing the Young Workforce
- A Blueprint for Fairness
- UHI Widening Access Framework

We will consult a range of stakeholders from draft to publication of our Access and Inclusion Strategy. We have also ensured that staff and students have been given the opportunity to feed into the development of the document. Elements of that have already taken place (February and June 2018) and work will continue within the Student Support work stream for the Business Case for Merger project taking place over the summer of 2018.

3) What matters to our students

In February 2017, students from NAFC UHI and Shetland College UHI signed a new partnership agreement and agreed a new structure across both Colleges for the Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA). Following this students have met regularly and have agreed priority areas, some of which are closely connected to Access and Inclusion, and these include:

- Poor transport links to both Campuses and within rural areas of the islands
- Inconsistent availability of transport subsidy, both local and national, such as Air Discount Scheme for non-Shetland residents and lack of student discount on local taxi firms for all Shetland students
- High living costs
- Isolation
- Lack of access to student social activities
- Being seen as an outsider if not from Shetland
- Inconsistent support for the student voice and access to student support services
- The lack of alternatives for learning materials in some courses (e.g. printed courses materials rather than use of Blackboard)

Students also noted what was important to them in how their learning was currently delivered, these points included:

- Staff are student focussed and the experience is more intimate and can be tailored to your individual needs
- Availability of resources to support learning, although some equipment is outdated

- Specialised learning opportunities
- Committed lecturing staff
- Access to local industry to support learning
- There is clear support and progression routes
- Different locations to learn, including the Learning Centres
- That students have a voice which is listened to, with a clear commitment from the new partnership agreement to build on that engagement

It is also important to note that our Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey in 2017 (NAFC UHI and Shetland College UHI students) highlighted that students overall are satisfied with their learning experiences.

There were however key themes in relation to Access and Inclusion which were highlighted by students and these are summarised below:

- Flexibility to support students who are in employment or have dependents is appreciated
- Opportunities to enable FE students more chances to study outwith the classroom would be appreciated by some who find classroom environments challenging
- Bob Campbell, the Student Support Lecturer based at Shetland College UHI, is a vital support for students and was highlighted a number of times as helping to ensure that students felt supported in achieving their learning outcomes

In moving forward we recognise the importance of ensuring our students are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of Access and Inclusion. Students must be given more opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions to ensure our services are both inclusive and accessible.

4) Current provision

There should be no barriers to entrants from protected characteristic groups such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, care leavers, etc. As a partner of UHI we have a student admissions and registration database which allows applicants to positively disclose information. Our admissions team work closely with student records to ensure that individuals who have made disclosures are flagged and supported appropriately.

The Shetland Islands does not have any of the SIMD 10% postcode areas within the geographic area covered. However, this does not mean there is no deprivation, far from it. The case has already been made by the Highlands and Islands Further Education Regional Board that this measure denies the existence of fundamental problems such as fuel poverty, high transport costs and limited access to services. Our students echo this, as highlighted earlier in this report and in their campaigns to improve affordable public transport with HISA.

a) Partnerships

We have a number of strategic partnership and operational links with a range of educational providers and support services. These include:

- The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)
- Shetland Islands Council (including schools, Eric Gray Resource Centre, Bridges Project, community and social services)
- Shetland Enterprise
- Skills Development Scotland

We also have a number of partnerships with employers and specialist providers which

facilitates access to curriculum that the College couldn't offer otherwise.

As an academic partner of the UHI staff members are active in network groups such as the support for learning group and disabilities group. This enables the sharing of good practice across the UHI network and provides support for individual partner colleges.

HISA is established with student representation across the tertiary education sector, providing a voice and coordinated approach to student engagement. This provides support for the student population and establishes strong links with management through representation on Shetland College UHI board and cross college committees, enabling learners to be fully involved in the evaluation and improvements of learning and teaching.

b) Continuing personal development

Staff development opportunities are made available to all staff providing the opportunity to explore equality whilst reflecting on their practice to ensure design and delivery embed equality and inclusion. This is effective in raising awareness and ensures staff take into account and embed equality legislation into their practice and approach to learners.

The annual staff development programme is informed by self-evaluations, procedures for dissemination of good practice and other quality improvement mechanisms. This includes activities designed to further the wider access and inclusion agenda. Relevant development opportunities will also be provided to support staff in meeting specific actual and anticipated student needs.

All of our staff complete an induction programme which covers Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Corporate Parenting. This ensures new staff have an awareness of

the importance of access and inclusion. Further specific information to support teaching staff within induction is also covered and is detailed within our Quality Manual.

c) ICT

As an academic partner of UHI we are in a position to offer greater access to the higher education curriculum, due in part to the level of investment in ICT infrastructure. Within this, many people in Shetland would not be able to access courses via video-conferencing, nor the many online options which are now available.

This investment also means that there are direct benefits to students with examples of outputs including:

- My Study Bar available digitally
- Accessible document formats
- Software such as TextHelp!Read&Write
- Access to online study skills resources

We also have equipment and hardware available to support students such as joysticks, specialist support chairs, etc.

d) Learning Centres

We operate six Learning Centres, one on each of the main islands, as well as in the remoter parts of the mainland and at a centrally accessible location in Lerwick.

These Centres are considered to be vital in delivering on our inclusive agenda throughout Shetland whilst contributing to the Shetland Islands Council meeting its obligations under the CLD Regulations (Scotland) 2013 and Local Actions Improvement Plan (LOIP), as well as the Scottish Government's agenda for digital inclusion. They are well attended and are much appreciated by the communities served.

Find out more

www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk/learning-centres

e) Student support

We offer a range of support services to all students, as follows:

- Personal adviser (PAT in HE) for students providing regular support, guidance on academic matters and access to study skills advice
- Support for all full-time and part-time students to overcome barriers that may affect their learning. Students who have a physical disability, a hearing or visual impairment, a mental health problem or specific learning disability, for example dyslexia, can access additional support with their studies. This includes individual support, tutor support for specific subjects, special arrangements for assessments and exams and timetabled drop in periods for additional support in for example essay writing, numeracy and computing skills
- Students who disclose a disability or learning support need, as previously mentioned, are automatically flagged on our student records system (SITS) and they are invited to make a personal learning support plan (PLSP) with our Learning Support Lecturer
- Guidance service which provides confidential advice and support on issues re. student's welfare, e.g. illness, debt, careers advice and personal matters
- Discretionary funds to provide financial assistance to students on low incomes and who are most in need
- Means tested childcare fund for full and part time students
- College based counselling service to provide confidential counselling support

- We are committed to supporting individuals with a care experienced background to ensure they have equal access to opportunities and success. [Further information](#) available online
- Our Library service offers services online in order to support students who cannot physically access the Library due to transport issues or those who are distance learners.

Find out more

www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk/student-support

f) Student progress

Monitoring of students' progress operates on an informal and formal basis throughout the session.

Students have the opportunity to discuss their progress with their Lecturers or Head of Section at any time. Discussions are carried out informally and are not necessarily recorded. Additionally, each Head of Section or PAT is responsible for interviewing each of their students at least once per semester.

The guidance service also operates an 'open door policy' to students and every attempt is made to see students at the first point of enquiry and to avoid the need for appointments unless absolutely necessary. Staff are also encouraged to refer students to the guidance service.

The College also promotes the UHI employability programme of core student support activities throughout the academic year. Although these sessions are optional, they are regarded as being hugely beneficial to developing students' employability skills.

g) Pre-exit guidance

In furtherance of the College's desire to ensure that all of its students move into positive destinations, pre-exit interviews are held from February onwards with students

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who are due to compete their qualification before the end of the session.

There have been challenges over the last two academic years with a marked reduction in the number of interviews that have taken place. Efforts to remedy that will be prioritised.

h) Students who have declared a disability

The student performance indicators for 2015/16 released by the Scottish Funding Council in January 2017 indicated that there were 98 students with a declared disability on courses lasting 160 hours or more.

The percentage of students completing their courses successfully was 65.3% which is only 0.1% below the percentage for the Scottish further education sector as a whole but 2.3% adrift of the percentage for the Highlands and Islands region.

The percentage withdrawing from their courses was 9% which is just 1% above the full-time student withdrawal rate but lower than most of the part-time rates of withdrawal.

The fact that 25.2% of those students who declared a disability were partially successful, compared to 13.2% of disabled students Scotland-wide and 13.6% across the Highlands and Islands clearly merits serious consideration. However, this very high level of partial success is found across the Shetland College UHI student population more generally, and it therefore seems unlikely that this is to do with disability, although this still merits further investigation.

i) Students who have declared an additional educational need including literacy and numeracy

The UHI Single Policy Environment Project will lead to a central Support for Learning

Policy and we welcome this as it will create a fair platform across the partnership, avoiding differences in approach, etc.

Please refer to our reports online for data and information on support for care experienced students

<http://www.shetland.uhi.ac.uk/publications>

- j) Students who are supported through bespoke provision (Price Group 5) at the college

In session 2015-16, the College enrolled students onto seven bespoke courses which attracted a total of 59 enrolments. These included a variety of courses styled as New Directions, Learning Disabilities (with Eric Gray Resource Centre), NPA Enterprise and Employability and Bridges. These covered areas of the curriculum such as Construction, Art, Cookery and Media.

This provision is regarded as being fundamental to the College's overarching ambitions for the people of Shetland and it is therefore very much the case that bespoke courses of this nature will continue to be developed. That has been evidenced during the last academic year (17/18) which has seen us work in partnership in developing ['Project Search'](#).

5) Looking ahead

There are ongoing efforts locally within the sector on the business case for merger project. Within that it is very important for us to review this strategy and put in place a fully costed action plan. That has been identified as a key output of the student support work stream.

We acknowledge that this Draft Strategy is lacking in a clear plan on the future at this stage. We feel it is vital that as part of the the student support services work stream and any associated, staff, student or community engagements on support services that we are mindful of the opportunity to obtain ideas and feedback on the future. We feel that is especially important in the areas of access and inclusion.

This draft will therefore be updated and published online in the autumn of 2018.

If you have comments, ideas or suggestions on how we could improve or maintain our services in relation to access and inclusion then please [email](#).

We would like to thank Mike Devenney for his help and support in developing this document. We would also like to thank students and staff for their input to date.
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