

Committee	Board of Management		
Agenda Item Number	4.1		
Date paper prepared	23/06/2022	Date of committee meeting	12/07/2022
Subject	2022 HISA Elections Shetland UHI Board of Management Report		
Author	Elliot Stradling		
Action requested	To Note		
Purpose of the paper	To inform of various notable events and analyses regarding the HISA Officer elections at UHI Shetland.		
Brief summary of the paper	An Analysis of the events and outcome of the 2022 HISA Officer elections at UHI Shetland.		
Consultation	None		
Resource implications	None		
Risk implications	None		

Link with strategy	This paper helps to analyse the success of this year's election cycle, in an attempt to better understand the role that UHI Shetland played, as well as what went well, what didn't go well and how we might improve for next year's elections.
<u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</u>	There were no reports of any student being unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised as a direct result of this election. All candidates were treated equally and their nominations, complaints and queries were handled in the exact same way, regardless of their grouping. Any evidence that the principles of UHI's Equality and Diversity policy were not upheld during this election, have not been found.
Island Community Impact	In order for candidates to be considered for the position of HISA Shetland Depute-President, they had to live locally to the Academic Partner and be within reasonable traveling distance to its learning centres.
Paper status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted – The paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential - The paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. [Please note papers may still be subject to Freedom of Information requests – see below].
<u>Freedom of information</u>	Open

2022 HISA Elections Shetland UHI Board of Management Report

Executive Summary

HISA conducted elections for 19 roles across the UHI region, four of which could be voted on by Shetland UHI students: HISA Regional President, HISA Regional Vice-President Communities, HISA Regional Vice-President Education and HISA Shetland Depute-President. These elections were conducted partly under Covid restrictions, with some of the candidate recruitment, campaigning, and voting, taking place virtually. All four roles were successfully recruited for.

The election performance at Shetland UHI saw a 2.70% turnout across all modes of study, while turnout across UHI was 2.18%. Shetland UHI had the 5th highest turnout per unit of population, of any Academic Partner during the 2022 election.

Introduction

Under the 1994 Education Act, each further and higher education establishment is required to have a Students' Association that elects its officers through a fair and democratic election. HISA's Articles of Associations states HISA must hold elections for 3 Regional Officers (President, Vice-President Communities, and Vice-President Education) and at least one representative from each academic partner.

The 2022 elections were held between 27th January and 18th March 2022. Due to Covid restrictions, HISA took measures to support the election process by conducting all of the candidate training and support, online. Furthermore, last year's election system brought in new elements that were not available previously, such as the turnout dashboard and the fast-track email function, which HISA has continued to utilise in the 2022 elections.

HISA uses the Single Transferable Vote system, following the Electoral Reform Society guidance. Voters select candidates in order of preference for each role they are able to vote for. HISA's website, provided by One Digital, has a built-in E-Voting module that allows HISA to conduct our elections entirely online. For every role in the election, voters had the option to Re-Open Nominations (RON), should they wish to reject the candidates on the ballot and call for the election to be re-run.

Posts and Results Summary

Elections for the following positions were held concurrently, resulting in the corresponding individuals being elected. Full results for each role are detailed in the [results section](#).

Position	Elected	Candidates*
HISA President	Heather Innes	2
HISA Vice-President Communities	Madeleine Brown	1
HISA Vice-President Education	Jun Hu	1
Shetland Depute President	Ian McCormack	1

*The option of Re-Open Nominations (RON) is not included in candidate numbers. Voters had the option to vote for (RON) in addition to any candidate.

Elections Co-ordination and Oversight

The 2022 Elections were overseen by National Union of Students, who served as our Returning Officer. The Returning Officer is responsible for the good governance of the election on behalf of HISA's Board of Trustees, to make judgements on appeals, and to give guidance to the Depute Returning Officer as and when required. Appointed internally, Anna Templeton served as our Depute Returning Officer. This role is designed to manage the election process and make formal decisions regarding rules and regulations, including the ability to disqualify any candidate. This role also oversees the delivery of the elections project.

Elliot Stradling served as Elections Co-ordinator, leading on the operational delivery of the elections project across the UHI region, organising training for staff/candidates and advising staff throughout the elections process. 3 members of the Student Voice and Advocacy team, along with the Communications Manager and HISA Chief Executive, supported the elections process throughout. Local staff were responsible for the implementation and delivery of the elections locally: promoting the elections to students, engaging with local college staff, recruitment of candidates, delivering local training to candidates, supporting the voting process and announcement of results to Local candidates.

Elections Process

Nominations Open	27 th January 2022 (10:00)
Nominations Close*	25 th February 2022 (14:00)
Announcement of Candidates	25 th February 2022 (16:00)
Rules, Ethics and Campaigning Candidate Training	28 th February 2022 (12:00)
	1 st March 2022 (18:00)
	2 nd March 2022 (10:00)
Video Training	(Provided to candidates via email)
Regional/Local Awareness Training	(Various sessions throughout March)
Voting Opens	14 th March (10:00)
Voting Closes	18 th March (13:00)
Results Announced	18 th March (16:00)

* Nominations were due to close on 22nd February, however due to 2 of the positions not having any nominations, as well as a concern that nominees for uncontested positions might drop out, nominations were extended to 25th February for all roles.

Nominations

HISA undertook nominations entirely online via a Microsoft Form available through the HISA Website. All the information we required from students at this stage (including an option to submit their photo and manifesto) were provided through this form. The table below provides the details of the number of nominations received at the close of the nominations period. Prior to and during nominations, drop-in sessions were run for any student that was thinking of standing but were unsure of what it might entail or how they might go about nominating themselves.

The table below provides the number of nominations received at the close of the period.

Position	Nominations Received	Number of Candidates at voting week
HISA President	2	2
HISA Vice-President Communities	1	1
HISA Vice-President Education	2	1
Shetland Depute President	1	1

Preparing the Candidates

Candidates received training materials electronically, with training sessions conducted entirely on Microsoft Teams. All Candidates were invited to live training sessions: The Rules, Ethics and Campaigning Training, which was available to all students and attended by 20 candidates across 3 days, Regional Awareness training which was only available to Regional candidates and was attended by 4 candidates, and Local Awareness Training which was led by local staff; attendance for these sessions varied over the academic partners. As well as these training sessions, candidates were provided with video training via email so they had the option to access it at their own convenience.

The concept behind the Rules, Ethics and Campaign training was to enhance candidates' ability to reach out to students, while the regional and local training was designed to provide candidates with an enhanced picture of the local nature of their academic partner, while giving regional candidates a wider picture of UHI as a whole.

Throughout the supported campaign period, candidates' materials were uploaded to the HISA website, enabling students to make informed decisions ahead of voting week. These materials included candidate images, manifestos, videos and posters (where provided.) These materials remained live until voting had closed in an effort to promote considered voting choices.

Voting

When live, voting was advertised clearly on multiple areas of the website. On the homepage, a large banner featuring the Student Elections design linked directly to the UnionCloud voting application, as did a 'vote now!' heading in the top menu and a page within the Student Elections information hub. As well as this, there was an 'unable to vote?' button which led students to a form where they could report any issues they were experiencing while trying to vote.

Students were emailed a direct fast-track voting link to their UHI emails on the first day of voting week, which gave them a one-click route to their ballot paper, by-passing the login process. Emails were also utilised locally to engage staff and Senior Management Team support, in encouraging voters. Unlike in previous years, HISA did not organise class visits for the candidates. Instead, students were offered the opportunity to record hustings' videos where they answered the following questions:

- If you could only achieve 1 thing from your manifesto, what would it be?
- If elected, how would you keep students up to date on your work, and be accountable to them?
- What would you do to make students more enthusiastic about giving feedback on their student life?
- What is the biggest issue that you think is affecting students right now that not enough people are talking about?
- If you could turn into another person, who would you be and why?

This was intended to give the students an opportunity to promote themselves and their campaign to students in a slightly less formal and more engaging way.

Virtual polling stations were set up alongside physical polling stations in order to engage students both online and in person, with the hopes that this would help us reach as wide a demographic of students as possible. HISA also managed class visits with local staff members, facilitating the need to engage a captive audience of students, while reducing the number of requests lecturers might receive from candidates.

Once voting had closed, HISA provided voters with the opportunity to give feedback on the voting process, receiving 227 responses. When asked how they found out about the elections 179 cited emails, while 132 cited that the candidate's manifestos were the main way in which candidates caught their attention. Students gave an average score of 4.14 out of 5 when asked to rate the voting process and 61% students said they were somewhat likely or very likely to engage with HISA in the future.

Marketing

The messaging of the 2022 Student Elections Campaign revolved around positive language that encouraged students to take a proactive stance in improving the student experience. Alongside the core and key word designs, HISA staff were provided with Microsoft Teams background images that they were encouraged to use throughout various stages in this election cycle. This aimed to help promote and raise awareness for the elections and HISA as an organisation.

In conjunction with this, each of the designs were produced bilingually with the Gaelic translation present on each material and approved by the HISA Gaelic Communities Coordinator. By increasing the presence of Gaelic in the Student Elections campaign, HISA was subsequently able to engage with students studying at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and remind voters across the partnership that they are studying in a community where Gaelic is spoken.

During the Student Elections period, a variety of communications activity was undertaken to support the campaign and maximise student engagement. This included utilisation of the HISA website, local and regional social media channels, MyDay and email.

Complaints

One complaint was received regarding the HISA Regional President position. However, this complaint was not upheld. No complaints were received regarding the Shetland local role or any of the other regional roles. The Regional President complaint was appealed to the Returning Officer at NUS. This appeal was submitted after the close of voting and the Returning Officer made the decision that the appeal was to be rejected on the grounds that it did not impact the results of the election.

Results

Table 1 details the result of the Presidential election. Heather Innes was elected for her first term in this role.

Table 1: HISA Regional President Election Result

Candidate	Votes	Elected?
Heather Innes	320	Yes
Ruth McFadyen	268	No
Reopen Nominations	28	No
Spoilt	1	N/A

Table 2 details the result of the Vice-Presidential Education election. Jun Hu was elected for his first term in this role. The only other candidate for this role withdrew before voting week began.

Table 2: HISA Regional Vice-President Education Election Result

Candidate	Votes	Elected?
Jun Hu	499	Yes
Reopen Nominations	138	No
Spoilt	2	N/A

Table 3 details the result of the Vice-Presidential Communities election. Madeleine Brown was elected for her first term in this role.

Table 3: HISA Regional Vice-President Communities Election Result

Candidate	Votes	Elected?
Madeleine Brown	511	Yes
Reopen Nominations	89	No
Spoilt	1	N/A

Table 4 details the result of the Shetland President Election. Ian McCormack was elected for his First term in this role.

Table 4: Shetland President Election Result

Candidate	Votes	Elected?
Ian McCormack	49	Yes
Reopen Nominations	6	No
Spoilt	0	N/A

Historic Election Overview

Table5 details the past performance of Shetland UHI during HISA elections. The 2022 election turnout was the lowest in the last five years across all Academic Partners that previously made up what is now Shetland UHI. This can be partially attributed to the continuation of Covid restrictions at certain Academic Partners, the lack of face-to-face voter engagement as a result of a reduced number of students on campuses and a noticeable decline in student interest and overall engagement. The voter share (the percentage of Shetland UHI Students vs all UHI students,) recorded its lowest result in the past three years.

Table6 details the number of unused votes there were for each of the 3 Regional roles, as well as for all depute president roles. From this data we can see that there were fewer unused votes than there has been in any of the past 4 elections.

Table 7 highlights candidate numbers. 2022 saw a reduction in candidate numbers, with every role receiving less nominations than the 2021 election; except for the Shetland President role, which had the same.

Table 8 highlights the election engagement for the role of Shetland UHI Depute President. This table shows in even greater detail, the lack of student engagement in regards to the 2022 election.

Local Reflection

One of the most notable aspects of the HISA elections at Shetland UHI in 2022, was that it took place during the merger of learning centres. NAFC Marine Centre received a reduced number of voters due to the fact that some of their students will have been studying either online or at a different Learning Centre. As well as this, some of the voter analytics are slightly skewed due to the merger. The HISA voting system recognised only 1 voter as being an NAFC marine student, when it is more likely that other voters were enrolled at NAFC but were caught up in the merger and counted as a Shetland College UHI student by the system. This theory is backed up by local staff who said they witnessed more than 1 NAFC Marine Centre student voting successfully, during voting week.

Despite the reduced total turnout at Shetland UHI, that the voter share (Shetland UHI's percentage of the overall voter count at UHI) was higher than it has been in the past three years. This suggests that while voter numbers were down across UHI, Shetland UHI managed to increase their share of the overall voter base.

Although the current Covid restrictions and lack of student engagement did have a negative impact on this year's elections, Shetland UHI had a lot of support from the offset. The Shetland local staff team played a key role in raising engagement and assisting in the delivery of a fair and balanced election. During these elections, students were unable to conduct class visits themselves so local staff reached out to curriculum staff at the earliest opportunity to arrange class visits during the elections period, so that HISA local staff could speak to as many students as possible and encourage them to vote. Unfortunately, staff were unable to conduct any class visits at the Scalloway Campus as the lecturers failed to respond.

The elections period also saw HISA create targeted and consistent messaging to Student Voice Representatives, clubs and society leaders, the wider student body and all staff, which we feel helped increase the number of students who stood for local positions and the turnout we had in a mostly online year.

The overall turnout has noticeably declined in comparison to previous years. This decline in votes, candidate nominations and overall engagement was noted in the 2021 election but it has continued to decline in the 2022 election. This in part could be attributed to the lack of face-to-face engagement and on-campus presence we had this year, however, increasing engagement on all fronts should be a key focus as we move towards the 2023 election.

Moving forward HISA aims to strengthen our already good working relationships with Shetland UHI staff, continue to use targeted and consistent communications and work in partnership with key staff to increase awareness and engagement in the elections process. We will, as always, continue to consider new ways to engage with a wide range of students and seek to improve engagement with class visits (hopefully Covid restrictions will continue to be reduced and allow for candidates to enter classes themselves next year) and an increase in on-campus students. We will look to ensure we are able to have a strong presence on campus for the 2023 election, as government and Academic Partner guidelines permit. Creating more awareness on campus and helping to strengthen engagement with students through various different means, will be an important outcome of a reduction in restrictions.

Appendices

Table 5: Overall Past Election Performance at Shetland UHI

Overall Past Performance	Academic Partner*	2019	2020	2021	2022
Voters	Shetland College	77	83	58	48
	NAFC Marine Centre	23	28	14	1
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	100	110	72	49
Turnout	Shetland College	5.12%	4.83%	5.01%	2.70%
	NAFC Marine Centre	29.87%	28.33%	4.68%	2.04%
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	6.33%	6.24%	5.17%	2.68%
Voter Share	Shetland College	2.82%	3.29%	3.47%	6.36%
	NAFC Marine Centre	0.84%	1.11%	0.84%	0.13%
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	3.66%	4.40%	4.31%	6.49%
Student Numbers	Shetland College	1504	1718	1157	1778
	NAFC Marine Centre	77	60	235	50
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	1581	1778	1392	1828
Shetland College Students as a Percentage of UHI		5.73%	5.85%	4.98%	5.77%
NAFC Marine Centre UHI Students as a Percentage of UHI		0.29%	0.20%	1.01%	0.16%
<i>Shetland UHI Students as a Percentage of UHI (Total)</i>		6.03%	6.06%	6.00%	5.93%
Shetland College Students as a Percentage of Shetland UHI		79.07%	90.33%	60.83%	94.53%
NAFC Marine Centre UHI Students as a Percentage of Shetland UHI		4.05%	3.15%	12.36%	5.47%

* The numbers presented are as they were presented and organised by UHI LIS to HISA.

Table 6: Unused Votes by UHI Students

Unused Votes	2019	2020	2021	2022
Did not vote for President	693	509	370	139
	25.36%	20.18%	22.13%	18.41%
Did not vote for Vice-President Further Education*	819	622	370	155
	29.97%	24.66%	22.13%	20.53%
Did not vote for Vice-President Higher Education**	750	639	350	118
	27.44%	25.34%	20.93%	15.63%
Did not vote for Depute President	63	18	32	15
	2.31%	0.71%	1.91%	1.99%

*For the 2022 election, this role was changed to Vice-President Communities

**For the 2022 election, this role was changed to Vice-President Education

Table 7: Candidate Numbers

Role	2019	2020	2021	2022
President	5	4	3	2
Vice-President Further Education	4	1	2	1
Vice President Higher Education	6	4	2	1
Shetland President	2	4	1	1

Table 8: Shetland Students Votes for HISA Depute President for Shetland UHI

Votes for HISA Depute President Shetland Islands	Academic Partner*	2019	2020	2021	2022
Votes	Shetland College	77	80	58	48
	NAFC Marine Centre	22	28	14	0
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	99	108	72	48
Turnout	Shetland College	5.12%	4.66%	5.01%	2.70%
	NAFC Marine Centre	28.57%	46.67%	5.96%	0%
	<i>Shetland UHI (Total)</i>	6.26%	6.07%	5.17%	2.62%

*The numbers presented are as they were presented and organised by UHI LIS to HISA.