



THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION IMPACT REPORT 2023/2024

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HISA Shinty Teams, at the Littlejohn Vase, 2024

WHO ARE WE?

The Highlands and Islands Students' Association is a student-led charity which represents every FE/HE student at the University of the Highlands and Islands.

It is our role to ensure every student gets the most out of their time at the University and has the opportunity to feed into the future of UHI.

UHI is far from being a traditional university. Instead of existing in one university town, or one region of the country, UHI exists across almost the entirety of Northern Scotland with 10 Academic Partners made up of learning centres and research institutions based as far south as Argyll & Bute and as far north as the very top of the Shetland Isles.



Because of this, we are very different from any other Students' Union or Students' Association. We exist at a regional level and at a local level to ensure that, despite the fact our members may be living many miles away from each other, we are working in their best interests by representing them in the classroom and at University Court.

We are independent from UHI. Whilst we receive funding from them, we are clear about our commitment to being a critical friend to the institution and lobbying for the best outcomes for our members - the students who study at UHI.

This year, we also launched our new website and look forward to using it to better support our members, especially those studying from home.

Finally, we are excited about the challenges of the next Academic Year for 2024-2025.



William Campbell
President and Chair of the
HISA Trustee Board,
2023/2024

Hi there, I cannot believe it is this time of the year where I welcome you to our 2023/2024 Academic Year Impact Report.

2024 sees the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) celebrate its ninth anniversary as a Students' Association and I have been lucky to be the sixth elected President of HISA.

In these nine years, HISA has produced staff who have gone on to work in other Universities and Unions, UHI staff, and a National Union of Students Scotland President. In our ninth year we have celebrated staff winning national awards and seen transformative change within HISA including our recruitment of a new Senior Leadership Team.

We have also streamlined elected officer roles to better serve the changing UHI student population, and going into the next academic year we will have a new strategy that is directly informed by and will serve the needs of our members.

As President I have fought for fairer travel for students across UHI at a government level with the hopes within the next year of achieving lower costs. This work includes lobbying the likes of Stagecoach, Scotrail, CalMac, North Link, and Loganair (to name a few) to ensure students can travel around the region at a reasonable cost.

This year has also seen me alongside a group of talented officers, HISA staff, and UHI Staff start to reprise our joint Student Mental Health Agreement with involvement from students across UHI. The agreement while still in the draft stages will prove to be a document that will have a massive impact on supporting students with their mental health.

It has been a difficult financial year within the whole of the University and College sector, and UHI and the Academic Partner Colleges have faced challenges in this space, with potential cuts facing the partnership. While I have seen and heard the anxieties from students across UHI, I have also seen the amazing effort that UHI staff go to despite these challenges, in order to support students and the enjoyment and optimism that students experience as a result of the impact that HISA elected officers and staff have on them.

This year, HISA has been working across the region to ensure that we give students the best experience that they can get during these challenging times. We have done this through our connections within the National Union of Students, Members of the Scottish Parliament, public bodies, and of course our UHI Partnership

William Campbell
 President and Chair of the
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SAMS

This year our team at SAMS was led by Kian McDonald. During Freshers Week, HISA hosted many events, such as a karaoke and ceilidh night, a movie marathon, and a BBQ on the Beach to welcome in our new cohort and begin students socialising across the campus. HISA also held a more traditional Freshers Fair, in which a large variety of companies hosted stalls for students to come along and find out more about the Oban community. This event was open to SAMS and UHI Argyll students based in Oban.

To celebrate the end of the first semester of 2023/24, HISA organised and hosted a Christmas ceilidh, in which all students were invited to come along and celebrate how far they had come. More than 75 undergrad, ACES Masters, AB Masters and PhD students attended; this is the most SAMS students to attend a student led event in years and a rare occasion that found students from all levels of study taking part in a single activity!

For LGBTQ+ History Month, HISA worked alongside Oban Pride to host our own Mini Pride within SAMS. This was an opportunity to look back on the history of the LGBTQ+ community and understand how much progress has been made. It was great to see 25+ students coming together to support those around them. Feedback on the day was positive with many students commenting on how beneficial the information provided was and how it was so much fun that these types of events should be repeated regularly.



At SAMS, for both Halloween and Valentine's Day, we hosted movie marathons, in which students were invited to sit and relax watching movies with some free snacks and drinks. The aim of this was to try to make the university building seem like it isn't just for work, but also an opportunity to socialise with peers. This seemed to have quite a positive reaction, and it was great to see a range of students coming along to take the pressure off a little.

As a special treat for students, Kian has initiated regularly putting out a bowl of sweets for anyone to help themselves to. This was done initially at Halloween, but brought out again for Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, and the exam season. This generated a positive reaction, and it was great to see a range of students coming together to relax.

For Mental Health Awareness month, and HISA's Stress Less Fest, at SAMS we created a "Positivity Wall", in which students and staff had the option to write a positive message on a post it note and stick it onto a wall for everyone to see. We did this around exam time to ensure that those people that needed the extra bit of motivation received it, even if it was from an anonymous source. We also had a large range of Mental Health stickers, with breathing exercises, ways to reduce anxiety, and just general positive messages available for the students taking exams and assessments.



ARGYLL

This year students were represented by Ahren Armstrong in Argyll. Ahren's focus this year was to make students from all learning centres feel included in the UHI experience. In October he sent a cauldron full of Halloween sweets to each of the 9 learning centres for students to enjoy and have a physical interaction with HISA where only virtual interactions existed previously due to remoteness. Having proven successful, this was repeated in December with candy canes and Santa hats.

This year, HISA has also had the pleasure of working alongside staff at the Helensburgh learning centre to contribute to the new student room where students can relax and socialise between classes. This area is next to a kitchen where students have access to a kettle and microwave.

HISA provided sofas and a coffee table to make this a truly comfortable place to relax. Argyll also had a positive year in terms of an increase in student voice representation, from increased SVRs being trained to better attendance of Argyll students at events like the All Student Meetings.



PERTH

This year, UHI Perth students were represented by Fiona Shaw and Rebecca Bond. Both Perth officers were keen to cement the Union Link space in the Webster building as THE hub for student activity, which started off with our biggest Freshers Fair to date in September 2023. A regular events calendar over Semester 1 and 2 was set up with quizzes, bingo, coffee chats and student club events to see which our students most enjoyed and amended appropriately. The team also put several very successful events over the course of 2023/2024. This included two Good Vibes Festivals with treatments from beauty students, performances from our music students and agencies in the local area who provided mental health support; Perth Pride which included crafting activities and performances from local drag artists; and a Ceilidh for Burns night which proved very popular with our international students; and a Christmas jumper day.

Student Voice Reps at UHI Perth know that HISA is the place to go if they want to make changes on campus for their learning experience. This year saw feedback dealt with quickly thanks to UHI Perth colleagues, but one of our biggest highlights was supporting a student petition that asked for, and achieved, a microwave in the Webster building! Alongside this, we were able to highlight the lack of gluten free options available on campus, which was successfully fed back to our catering supplier, as well as lobbying for and achieving an increase the Wi-Fi coverage in one of our older buildings.

In partnership with the Active Campus Coordinator at UHI Perth, the officer team and HISA colleagues helped to establish a vast Give it a Go programme as part of Freshers week and extending throughout the academic year with the goal to have more and accessible sports clubs; this included Boccia and fencing. More successes related to sports clubs can be found later on in this report!



In their 11th year, the Perth HISA team once again ran the Outstanding Best Inspiring (OBI) Awards. Alongside refreshing the categories this year, the team were able to increase the number of nominations and run an awards ceremony during a challenging backdrop at UHI Perth in June. The HISA President and UHI Perth Principal gave key speeches at the ceremony, and our highly commended and award winners were happy to be recognised for their contributions to our learning community.



HIGHLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

The Highland Theological College remains one of the almost exclusively online campuses at UHI following Covid – this has resulted in an exciting geographic spread of students studying with HTC, with some studying close to either the Dingwall or Paisley campus and others studying from France, Spain, America and other places throughout the globe.

Despite this geographic spread, and the fact that we did not have an officer in post for HTC this year, HISA was able to organise events for HTC students, starting the new year with an in-person freshers' event at both the Dingwall & Paisley campuses where there were a lot of discussions about how HISA can engage better with students at HTC. Students asked for more opportunities to attend in-person events throughout the academic year. This led to a Study Day being hosted at Paisley by HISA where hot drinks and snacks were offered. We also joined Paisley up via Teams with students based at other campuses. An online quiz was also hosted for HTC students which proved to be successful with the winner receiving a gift card for Scribd for a year's subscription.

As an end of year celebration, HISA hosted a 2-day visit to the Dingwall Campus where staff were able to speak with students, find out how they felt throughout their year(s) of study at HTC and enjoy a meal together.

We were also able to recruit more student reps this year at HTC and we are hoping to recruit even more in the next academic year, as we gained such wonderful and valuable insight from this year's group of reps.

INVERNESS

In Inverness this year, we were represented by Liz Keegan, Holly Pearce and Joe Sweeney. Between them, they attended 50 student induction sessions in August and September 2023 to promote HISA and the Student Voice Rep role, and organised a well attended Freshers. A focus for the team this year has been to deliver a range of activities on the Inverness campus to create a better sense of community and ensure that students feel that Inverness is a fun and exciting place to study. Other activities delivered this year include a Halloween Costume Competition, Hunt the Haggis, Movie Nights, Forestry Olympics, Pictures with Santa, a Valentine's ceilidh, a Pride Party and a games night. Refreshers in January was a particular success with a large number of students using the rodeo bull in the Inverness atrium and visiting the alpacas outside on the grass.

In terms of educational projects, Liz focussed on campaigning for better mental health support for students and training for staff which lead to a wider canvass of student opinions on the subject via the HISA Question of the Month in May, and which is feeding into a refresh of the joint HISA/UHI Student Mental Health Agreement. Holly has led on support for networked students including starting a campaign to get a space on UHI campuses for networked students to study, showing them that they are welcome at UHI campuses regardless of what or where they are studying.

Looking forward, we are excited about our move to a new office in the Inverness building and its location near the canteen, and on working on halls and campus induction events and materials to welcome students back in the autumn.



MORAY

Whilst this year, Moray was sadly without official officer representation for most of the year, a huge range of events and activities took place and HISA staff have been involved on the ground supporting students. Multiple events were held for Freshers in the autumn of 2023, highlights including hugely popular visits by Therapets at three different campuses for the first time ever, plus interactive gambling awareness workshops, pizza lunches and a health point visit. Other activities delivered included a sexual health drop-in session for students to discuss consent and with some students staying for the full session and engaging in games, quizzes, and discussion about sexual health.

For LGBTQ+ history month, HISA collaborated with the Moray Active Campus Coordinator and LEAP Sports to host an LGBTQ+ Sports Day and Pride & Pizza party. The sports day consisted of multiple stations with different activities in the Moray sports hall. After each activity, the 25 participants learned a fact about LGBTQ+ inclusion. Following the session, pizza and games were put on in the Aye Pod.

In 2024, Moray Student Intern, Charlotte Usher held 12 pub game hangouts in the Aye Pod starting from the 29th of February until May 31st, with up to 30 students attending each event. In May, staff members at UHI Moray advertised the hangouts to their students and the numbers rose to over 40. Similar events were also held for online students. These events were run alongside active campus events which gave students a place to go after they have attended walking netball, the fitness suite and volleyball activities.

A poetry project was also run at Moray this year in the Aye Pod as part of the hangouts. Fourteen poems and counting have been written collectively by UHI Moray students and staff; these poems communicate the highs and lows of life at the College and have been publicly displayed. All of these activities have significantly increased student engagement with HISA at Moray this year.



SHETLAND

Whilst Shetland did not have an elected student officer this year, HISA staff on the ground ensured that activities were delivered for and with students and that students were represented at key Shetland meetings.

HISA activities this year include providing transport for students studying at Mareel to deliver a community event where they showcased their talents at a Student Night concert. This event provided students with real world experience of performing in front of an audience. Approximately 20 music and media students performed and filmed, for an appreciative crowd of 60 students over lunchtime at Mareel, the Shetland Arts Venue. This initiative both supports our Mareel based students as part of their learning experience and integrates them into the wider UHI Shetland student community.

This year in Shetland, HISA has worked with students, at their request, to obtain and set up a quiet room on campus, where students can go to decompress and take a quiet moment. HISA put forward a substantial portion of its Shetland budget to purchase a sofa, bean bags, tables, lamps, yoga mats and weighted blankets to create a welcoming and peaceful space for anyone experiencing overwhelming feelings. This space has been used frequently by students since it was opened and will continue to be of benefit to students in the years to come.

Other activities delivered this year include a student social event at Mareel, Shetland Arts Venue which included free refreshments and lots of socialising and sharing of information. Three yoga sessions were provided during Freshers allowing students to relax and create an environment of self-care at the end of a busy round of inductions and Freshers. A treasure hunt was created at Scalloway and Lerwick campus where numbers were placed at useful spots across campus such as gender-neutral toilets, printers, student support services and student areas. Completed entries were swapped for a hot breakfast roll on campus, with

around 40 students participating. Students were also offered free cinema tickets for sending in a photo that summed up their student experience so far, with a total of 40 tickets being given away. This received excellent feedback from those who participated, with one student commenting that they would not have chosen to have any involvement with HISA if it were not for this initiative.

In the spring, HISA ran an event to promote local businesses offering student discounts, with brightly coloured trolls being hidden around campus – across Lerwick, Scalloway and Mareel. All students had to do was catch the trolls and the lucky students were given a £25 local gift voucher of their choice as a reward. This event has brought some fun to the end of the academic year, given 15 students a treat of their choice while alerting them to available student discounts, and offering a clear demonstration of HISA's commitment to supporting our local community businesses.

And finally, a major celebration took place during LGBTQ+ History Month which shone the spotlight on some prominent Scottish campaigners of LGBTQ+ rights and the Annexe Shetland visited Lerwick campus with some of their Pride merchandise to sell to students. LGBTQ+ rainbow flag pins were purchased and offered to students free of charge, and these were also available for staff to purchase. The proceeds of this are being donated to the Shetland Pride Fund. Around 50 pins were given out, and 12 students made purchases from the pop-up shop at a discounted rate.

"Lots of lovely events on, thank you."

"Thanks so much. You're doing a great job with HISA. I'd never have thought I'd get involved usually!"



ORKNEY

Whilst Orkney did not have an elected student officer this year, the HISA team delivered a range of events for students. For Freshers, a BBQ was organised, catering for approximately 60 students. This enabled HISA to create a fun, welcoming and inclusive social environment providing both meat and non-meat products and gluten free options free of charge. The success of this event was down to the sharing of resources and staff and so a testament to the effective partnership working with the Orkney Hospitality Department, and the collaboration of the UHI Orkney Social Committee. This event provided students with effective way to help students and staff to break the ice at the beginning of the academic year and socialise together while eating. It was an excellent introduction to HISA and a chance to make new connections by chatting to HISA and UHI staff and other students.

In the autumn of 2023, around 60 students and staff members participated in an indoors event, along with local charities, around the White Ribbon campaign. Students and staff signed the White Ribbon Pledge to fight gender-based violence and students helped to raise £110 to support local charities for GBV prevention and survivor support. Working in partnership, HISA and UHI Orkney showed a commitment towards supporting GBV victims, creating an inclusive, safe and supportive environment for students and staff while strengthening community bonds with local charities.

Other events delivered this year include a Spooky Autumn Quiz, again in collaboration with the Hospitality Department to organise the catering for the event and an Orkney vs Shetland Quiz where 8 students and members of the UHI Orkney staff participated enthusiastically in a joint event with in-person teams in Orkney and Shetland linked by video conference. Medals were presented to the winning team alongside ownership of an Inter-Island Trophy which will be played for again next year by both Island Teams. This event provided students and staff at both UHI Shetland and

UHI Orkney to engage in extra-curricular activities with a fun but competitive edge. Orkney emerged victorious. Until next year!

One of the activities that we are most proud of this year is the Orkney Student Pantry. This is a now well-established student initiative, supported by HISA. Students are regularly using the food and sanitary products offered by the pantry anonymously, to encourage take-up. Orkney students made a successful application for a grant which has provided much needed financial sustainability for the pantry. The student group has successfully recruited another member this year which has strengthened the continuity of student leaders in the initiative. Alongside the pantry, HISA in Orkney ensures students have wide access to free sanitary products and has organised several clothes swaps creating an opportunity for students to save money by swapping unwanted clothes for other pre-loved items during the cost of living crisis. This also offers a sustainable option against throw away fashion and the harm this can create to the environment – both issues were raised as a focus by SVRs in 2022/23. Close collaboration has ensued with local charity shops on the Island.

A new Living History Society and a new Arts & Crafts Orkney Society were established on Orkney this year, with both student & staff engagement. Regular meetings, craft and arts sessions have taken place offering educational activities to members and these groups have become involved in wider student activities such as the Stress Less campaign.

And finally, HISA in Orkney created 50 end of term wellness packs to help students through their exam and assessment period, and to sign off another busy year. These packs were made available to on campus and online students, cementing HISA as an inclusive and caring organisation. All 50 packs were successfully distributed, receiving excellent feedback.



"I am coming to the end of my Masters with UHI and have signed up for the well-being packs each year. It is almost as though you guys are telepathic and know when us students are struggling and need a bit of motivation. I am sat writing my Dissertation with my chocolate cake in a mug and just feel so glad to have chosen to study with UHI. As a distance student, it can be really isolating.... So in all, just want to pass on my thanks and say that I am incredibly grateful for your efforts."



NORTH, WEST & HEBRIDES

North, West and Hebrides students were represented by Shannon MacCallum and Sophie-Ann Bain this year with one other post being vacant. For Freshers this year, in NWH a 'freshers tour' was set up due to the sheer size of our new College. This was to enable students to get a chance to meet with the HISA teams in person, and so that the team could see how different each location is for the future planning of events across the College. Events were held in Thurso, Alness, Fort William, Stornoway and Portree. Hundreds of students across NWH attended these events alongside 50 external groups. During the Stornoway freshers' fayre, a lecturer hosted a Tabletop Roleplaying game session, that led to a weekly meeting of students to continue playing.

This year, Sophie Ann worked with staff at Thurso to create a quiet space on the campus for students with anxiety, neurodiversity and poor mental health to go to and relax when busy campus life gets overwhelming. The room is now fitted with comfortable seating, fidget toys and colouring books and pencils to help assist with relaxation. The Students' Association office in Thurso was also converted to a shared student space where students could access hot water and free tea and coffee. This was a way to reduce costs for students facing the difficulties of the cost-of-living crisis. And Shannon has been working on ways to help students during the cost-of-living crisis and working on encouraging students to utilise their democratic right by registering to vote and obtain voter ID.



On October 10th, a pop-up event for world mental health day was held on the Stornoway campus with a goal of making a positivity wall of things that students and staff do to help with their mental health. The HISA team set up in the canteen with a board, pens, post-its as well as teas and coffees and had good interaction with students, with 36 students willing to contribute and display their views and some great suggestions being made about how to assist with their mental health and relaxation. This resource was displayed on campus until the end of November so that anyone passing by could view the display.

In November the officers focused on promoting the 16 days of action campaign against Gender Based Violence. 19 Stornoway and 12 Fort William students signed pledge cards in support of the campaign. This event raised awareness of current issues and allowed our students an opportunity to voice their views towards an important cause.

On December 13th, a Christmas crafts event was held on the Stornoway campus. Activities included candle making and wreath making, alongside a hot chocolate offer which raised £91 for Macmillan Cancer. Hot Chocolate events were also held at other NWH larger centres with 50 students attending in Thurso and 60 students in Fort William, proving an opportunity for students to meet and socialise.



Pancake Day was celebrated in style across the North, West & Hebrides learning centres with Pancakes and Politics events being held at several centres. We engaged with around 100 students across the learning centres on the day in debate and discussion around student politics whilst promoting the HISA Elections.

In an aim to encourage healthy eating and regular exercise to students, the team at Fort William hosted a Well Fest '24 event in early February. With assistance from the hospitality students and Lochaber Environmental Group students and staff were treated to freshly prepared healthy snacks and were able to prepare their own smoothies by having a cycle on the smoothie bike. Around 70 smoothies were made across the 2-day event.

HISA supported students in Uist to come together for an end of year BBQ, and of course, it wouldn't be a student event in Uist without a performance or two from the talented music students. This was a great way for the students at one of our smaller learning centres to come together, enjoy their student community and be a good send off for the international students.

And on May 21st, HISA held an end of year barbeque on the Stornoway campus as a thank you and celebration for students attending the College this year. This was a well-attended event by both students and staff with at least 75 people attending the barbeque.



DEMOCRACY & STUDENT VOICE

This year, our elections processes led to a much higher number of officers being recruited for the 2024/2025 academic year than for this year, with a co-option policy being developed for the few remaining vacancies to ensure that each College is represented in the next academic year. Throughout the year we have trialled a new format for All Student Meetings, focussing on key themes relevant to students at that time, such as College cuts and building communities at UHI and we have trialled a new Question of the Month concept with students to gain instant student feedback on live issues. Student stakeholder panels and officers have also been involved in directly recruiting a number of senior UHI leadership roles.

Towards the end of the academic year, we recruited a new Insight and Democracy Co-ordinator who will work with students to lead a review of our democratic process and structures next year. In July 2024, our Development Managers led a newly formatted set of officer training to ensure that our officer cohort for the next year is well prepared for their roles. And as part of an ongoing Board of Management project, we have been working on strengthening support and training for student members of UHI and AP governing bodies, and raising understanding of student engagement with other governors.



ADVICE SERVICE

Since April 2022, HISA's Advice Service has provided independent support, guidance, and representation to UHI students with academic and related concerns. It also maintains a function to inform students about topics such as well-being, the Disabled Students' Allowance, and transitioning into student life, via monthly blog posts available on the HISA website. These blog posts have been well-received by our members, with the themed post receiving an average of more than 120 views.

This year, the team received **54 inquiries** from students across the University, an increase on the year before. The feedback shows that students who provided feedback were **100% satisfied** with the impartial advice received from the Advice Service regarding their issue or concern. They noted that being able to contact the service via WhatsApp made it more accessible for them, a service we intend to continue using. In addition, this year the Advice Service provided support to various students during industrial action and course change consultations, ensuring that their engagement and individual circumstances were carefully considered.

Beyond individual cases, this year our service has reached a wider group of students as we have consistently taken a proactive approach to addressing issues that could potentially impact larger groups

or specific demographics. Whether issues were brought to our attention reactively or proactively, we managed them collectively to ensure that all students received the best possible support, especially in areas of course discontinuation, the Disabled Students' Allowance and the Mitigating Circumstance process. The Service has also delivered a programme of staff development within UHI to raise awareness and understanding of the service amongst staff.

The Advice Service represents an important area of highly specialised and intensive work within our organisation. We look forward to working closely with UHI in the upcoming academic year to achieve even better student outcomes. Our charity's Advice Service involves highly specialized and intensive work to assist individual students. We are constantly improving the service to expand the support we provide. As of June 2022, our Advice Coordinator has earned an SVQ accreditation from Shelter Scotland to offer housing assistance and advice. We aim to implement this and provide housing advice starting the academic year. We are excited to collaborate closely with UHI in the upcoming academic year to further improve student outcomes. specific demographics. Whether issues were brought to our attention reactively or proactively, we managed them collectively to ensure that all students received the best possible support, especially in areas of course discontinuation, the Disabled Students' Allowance and the Mitigating Circumstance process. The Service has also delivered a programme of staff development within UHI to raise awareness and understanding of the service amongst staff.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year was our second full year as the restructured Community Engagement Department, and our first full year with our new Sports Development Coordinator Amanda Fleet in post. Having rebuilt the governance, policies, and processes for Student Groups last year, in 2023/2024 we saw that work pay off through an increase in sustainable student groups, member numbers and participation, club activities, and competition successes. We also introduced new communities for students with protected characteristics and diverse needs and increased HISA activity in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity campaigns. Through our provision of communities, and sporting and cycling opportunities, we helped students improve their physical health, reduce isolation and loneliness, build confidence, find support, and achieve success in a variety of extra- and co-curricular activity.

Our highlights this year include:

23 new clubs and societies established since Autumn 2023: 13 sports clubs and 10 societies for **a total of 52 clubs and societies** across multiple campuses. Of the 52 original groups, 43 will be continuing on for 2024/2025 with more new groups bound to start within the first months of the academic year. Across all these groups, we estimate a **membership of 700-800!**



We released our Handbook and updated our Website Guidance to give clubs and societies more comprehensive and accessible support for the improved governance, management, and sustainability of student groups. This work has provided staff, officers, and 80+ committee members with the information and resources needed to provide strong and well-managed student groups open to our entire membership.

This year, we offered 34 grants to clubs and societies to help them achieve their aims and support the activities they provide for students. These grants helped send our sports clubs to Scottish Student Sport tournaments, paid for End-of-Year events for academic societies, purchased and helped maintain equipment, supported gym memberships and specialised coaching, paid for facility usage, supplied craft materials, and more! We estimate that these grants helped improve the experiences of over 400+ members.

We launched **7 Student Networks** for underrepresented students this year. These are online spaces to socialise, learn about resources and activities, talk about student experiences, collaborate, and much more. Currently, we have around 80 students signed up across the Pride Network, International Student Network, Women's Network, Students of Colour Network, Digital Network, Neurodiversity Network, and the Accessibility Network. Throughout the year, these networks sponsored events at local campuses.

Through the Pride Student Network, our department co-hosted and helped sponsor events across multiple campuses to celebrate LGBTQ History month. These events included collaborating with UHI to celebrate the Rainbow Mark designation and hosting parties and inclusive sporting sessions. These events saw between 100-150 participants.

Over the past year, we worked to put together a UHI shinty team to compete at the Littlejohn Vase, the Scottish University's shinty tournament. We secured a major sponsor for the team, Kishorn Port & Dry Dock Ltd, and organised all the logistics to get our teams to St Andrews, with 10 students competing in the women's team and 12 students competing in the men's team. Both of our teams finished top of the pool stages, with our women's team going on to claim third place and our men's team winning the vase itself – the first time the trophy has gone to a team outside the central belt in 15 years. This was a historic moment for UHI and gained the attention of the press, including the BBC, increasing UHI's profile in the university sporting scene.

We held the first ever UHI varsity tournament. Taking place in Inverness, we had teams from Perth, Moray and Inverness competing in football, basketball and volleyball with trophies available for the winners. This event showcased the collaborative work between HISA and the Colleges. Around 100 students participated and students also came along to watch the tournament, helping to increase a sense of sporting community.

For disability sport, we helped form Boccia clubs for students with support needs at Perth and Moray this academic year, each consisting of around 14-20 students, with additional coaching by Perth sporting students. The Perth Boccia team has competed against other College teams including travelling to North Lanarkshire College in Ravenscraig, with some of the students winning medals. We also hosted a taster session in Fort William for 26 students at NWH and are currently doing groundwork in Stornoway and Inverness to expand our Boccia offering.

We increased the number of UHI teams competing in the Scottish Student Sport College National Finals in Edinburgh with volleyball, basketball and football teams from Perth and a football team from Inverness. The day was a great opportunity for students to compete for medals in a large scale competition at world class facilities, meeting students from other colleges. A total of around 40 UHI students participated. The Inverness football team won the football tournament and the Perth volleyball team came second.

This year saw the most nominations we've ever had for the Sporting Blues awards with 35 nominations! We also gave out a record number of awards with 14 in total, five of these to para-athletes. This demonstrates the high level of achievement and diversity within sports at UHI.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through our Campus Cycling Officer, we obtained grants from Cycle Scotland for resources and activities for Perth UHI, Moray UHI, and North West Hebrides UHI. We secured a Cycle Friendly Award for Perth UHI, and hosted Dr. Bike Sessions across multiple campuses and secured Cycle Leadership Courses for Perth and Moray. The courses provide 15-20 students with skills to lead rides for other students and start a cycle club. The Dr. Bike sessions helped 30+ students keep their bicycles fit for purpose.

We were especially proud this year to have had 3 nominations shortlisted for NUS Scotland awards: both Amanda Fleet and Emma Miller were shortlisted for Staff Member of the Year and HISAC, our sub aqua club, was shortlisted for club of the year. We are delighted that Amanda Fleet won the Staff Member of the Year for her incredible work in developing sporting at UHI with a special emphasis on inclusive sporting. Amanda also won the Staff Member of the Year at the Scottish Voluntary and Charity Organisations awards.



Outside of sport, this year we partnered with White Ribbon Scotland, Moray Rape Crisis, and RASASH around the topic of Gender-Based Violence and led HISA's campaign for the 16 Days of Action to end GBV. We participated in Perth and Inverness' Reclaim the Night marches and released a two-week social media campaign with resources and activities for wide engagement. The Women's Network helped sponsor a Sexual Wellbeing Drop-in at Moray UHI and an online Consent workshop for all students.

We also worked with Moray Rape Crisis to hold a bespoke training for student-facing officers around identifying and supporting students who may experience GBV. The workshops and trainings had roughly 30+ participants. The training is also being developed into a video to be accessible to all staff and student leaders.

We are currently working on two major projects for increasing student opportunities next year. The first project is the development of Academic Societies along a collaborative model with staff in subjects and faculties. These societies will work to enhance the student learning experience by providing co-curricular opportunities to engage with learning outside of the classroom.

The second project is a Community Engagement Directory, whereby we offer students opportunities to volunteer and participate in external community organisations and charities. We will work with each organisation to make sure the opportunity is safe, welcoming, and supportive for student participants.

QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE

Under the leadership of the new Director of Student Engagement and Representation, this year we have made some real changes, alongside building plans to be implemented next year.

Changes are currently being made to the Student Voice Representation system including changes to recruitment, training and recognition of students who volunteer as Reps, including piloting Scotland wide guidance in this space. We have secured funding from the UHI Learning and Teaching Academy's Scholarship Fund to pilot a Subject Intern scheme, providing student expertise for internal quality panels and reviews as well as committees for one of UHI's new Cognate Subject Groups.

HISA officers and staff have been involved in all seven of Education Scotland's Annual Engagement Visits to Colleges and also in one Thematic Review and in QAA's Quality Enhancement and Standards Review of UHI. These conversations have allowed HISA to engage with the TQEF review methodology and become involved in institutional and national conversations about what review looks like in the future for UHI. We have also made contributions to national educational conferences to disseminate our expertise around our Board of Management and student engagement work.



OUR ORGANISATION

2023/2024 was a time of great change for HISA, with the arrival of a new CEO in November leading a new structure which included the appointment of a Director of Student Engagement and Representation and a Director of Finance and Operations, the second being an internal promotion. With these new appointments to our leadership team, we have prioritised our focus through clear themes around student representation, community engagement, operations and marketing.

Alongside student leadership, this new senior team has been focused on consulting on and creating a new strategy for the organisation and related KPIs, alongside consulting on the organisation's brand. It has also been involved in making improvements in both external and internal activities – from developing a new process for elected officer onboarding, induction and training, refreshing the Student Voice rep systems and processes, working with the University on developing a Student Partnership Agreement and Student Mental Health Agreement, developing a Gaelic Plan for the organisation, working more closely with the central UHI comms team on joint messages and developing internal policies and procedures.



We also launched a new monthly all student newsletter in 2024 which has had an average open rate of 50% since the first edition in February. The newsletter has significantly increased our impact and student reach and will be continued next year. The new leadership team has also been working on diversifying income streams by applying for grants and pursuing sponsorship conversations. We are also delighted to have been accredited as a Real Living Wage employer in 2024.

This year we worked much more closely with key UHI colleagues on delivering the HISA awards and Sporting Blues, with more nominations put forward than any previous years. Our thanks go to the UHI staff who did the bulk of the work towards these awards – you know who you are!

As an organisation we have been pleased to be able to increase the number of Trustees this year, including the onboarding of two new student Trustees and one new external member alongside two existing external members agreeing to stay on for second terms which will provide significant stability in terms of leadership and direction to the organisation as UHI enters a period of change.



SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS THROUGH CHANGE

This year we have provided direct support to students who are worried about potential and proposed course cuts and changes to programmes.

Across many of the Colleges, HISA has been active in meeting with students to listen to their concerns, organising student feedback sessions, discussing issues in student meetings and responding to consultation documents using student feedback gained from meetings and class visits.

Alongside this, we have written to MPs, MSPs, Trade Unions and local councils to advocate for partnership working and for increased funding for Scottish tertiary education and supported students to do the same. We have also engaged with local and national media to bring the funding issue to the attention of the Scottish Government.

We have also supported students by explaining their rights to them and helped them to self-organise and self-advocate including support and materials for holding protests and marches. We are grateful to those Principals who engaged directly with students through this difficult year.



OUR 2023/2024 OFFICER TEAM



William Campbell
*President
and Chair of
Trustee Board*



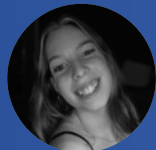
Gary Souter
*Vice President
Education*



Ahren Armstrong
*Depute
President
(UHI Argyll)*



Elizabeth Keegan
*President
(UHI Inverness)*



Holly Pearce
*Depute
President
Education
(UHI Inverness)*



Joe Sweeney
*Depute
President
Activities &
Welfare (UHI
Inverness)*



Melissa Carr
*Depute
President
Education (UHI
Moray)*



Sophie-Ann Bain
*Depute
President -
North
(UHI NWH)*



Shannon MacCallum
*Depute
President -
West
(UHI NWH)*



Fiona Smith
*President
(UHI Perth)*



Rebecca Bond
*Depute
President
Activities &
Welfare (UHI
Perth)*



Kian McDonald
*Depute
President
(Scottish
Association for
Marine Science)*

Find out more at www.hisa.uhi.ac.uk