

Committee	Board of Management		
Date paper prepared	24/09/2025	Date of committee meeting	01/10/2025
Subject	Principal's Report		
Author	Jane Lewis, Principal with members of SMG		
Action requested	For discussion		
Purpose of the paper	To update the board on activities across the College. These contribute to our fulfilment of the SFC's outcome framework. This framework covers seven aspirations around: Funding regularity, Good governance, Financial viability and sustainability, Estates and Infrastructure, High quality Learning and teaching, Student interests access and success, Skills and workbased learning, Research excellence, Knowledge exchange and innovation and includes two cross cutting themes – Net zero and Equalities, diversity and inclusion.		
Brief summary of the paper	UHI context is updated. The current position on student numbers and credits is provided. Activities of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing committee are provided. An update is given on activity related to the Islands Deal. Updates are given on research activities and other college activities and achievements that contribute to the SFC outcome framework.		
Consultation	SMG members provide the material included in the report		
Resource implications	n/a		
Risk implications	n/a		
Link with strategy	Links to all parts of the college strategic plan		
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	n/a		
Island Community Impact	n/a		
Paper status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction.		
Freedom of information	Choose an item. If closed/ withheld, select date this will become 'open': Enter a date.		

1. UHI Updates

Richard Emborg has joined UHI from Durham University as VP Student recruitment and growth. Derek McGhee (Dean for Research & Innovation) has retired and the process for a new appointment is underway.

The transformation project continues with pace. Over the summer work has continued to develop a new operating model to underpin the writing of the full business case. UHI Shetland staff are engaged in various workstreams and activities informing this work. Key themes have been noted, including community and local delivery, digital innovation, artificial intelligence, student experience, improved collaboration across the partnership and more. Discussions have centred not only on areas for improvement, but also on preserving and building upon much of what UHI already does well.

2. Update on enrolment figures (FE/HE)

Applications are slowing down now (10th September) however to date we have processed 685 applications from 599 individuals with 458 unconditional offers having been made for AY25/26 (including Schools).

Staff have been working on enrolment support, with reminders going to students and sections to enrol promptly. Registry staff worked with Student Experience staff to support learners with online enrolment processes. At point of writing there have been 764 enrolments. With work now underway to link students to modules in a timely fashion.

Student numbers:

	12/09/25	24/09/24	20/09/23
Full time FE (FT)	65	96	76
Part time FE (PT)	543	654	475
Full time HE (FT)	111	91	112
Part time HE (PT)	156	99	116

In terms of enrolments we are down on FE full-time and on p/t enrolments compared to this point last year. HE enrolments are up.

So far we have claimed only 100 FE credits though this is very early in the term. The target is 3902. We anticipate we will achieve our credit target. With fewer FE FT enrolments, it will be more of a challenge and will mean that we will need to focus on part-time and short course delivery.

It is too early in the term to draw down data for the HE FTE as the enrolments onto modules have not yet have been completed. However, early indications are positive with the increased enrolments that we will be well placed to meet our targets.

3. Update on Short Courses

In terms of short courses since 01/08/25, 14 courses were run with 78 candidates. So far these have generated £26,450. It is very early in the term for this. Last year we set a target of £350000 for short courses and we have spoken about some focus on these courses to assist with our recovery plan.

4. New Courses

Sections are developing and delivering new courses driven by demand and to maximise the offer available to Shetland students.

a. Health, Care and Society

New courses delivered:

- Shared joint delivery (with Argyll) – NC L6 Social Sciences and NC L5 Social Sciences.
- Joint delivery PDA Education Support – Shetland/Argyll

c. Marine Science

New courses approved:

CertHE Sustainable Marine Biology and Environmental Science QIC approval event 10.9.25 – already approved by UHI LMS Associate Dean Audrey DeCou

d. Technology, Engineering, Marine & Built Environment

New courses delivered:

Maritime based Small Ships Navigation and Radar short courses, popular with seafarers looking to meet new requirements of Workboat Code 3

New courses approved:

- Approved Engine Course level 2 Course ready for MCA approval.

5. Update on Apprentices

Age Band	New Start	In-train	Leavers	Achievers	Achievement Rate.	Spend
16-19	5	86	12	10	83.3%	£100,189
20+	61	155	43	41	95.3%	£72,951
Grand Total	66	241	55	51	92.7%	£173,140

The Table above shows the period 4 data (to end of July). The first milestone period is period 5 (as yet unpublished). The target for the period is 51 starts. By period 4 we were already at 61 starts. As of 15/9 there are 87 starts on the system so well in excess of target. The next target is 110 by end of October. The majority of new starts are in Aquaculture.

In terms of spend, already £173,140 claims were made by end of period 4. The target is 37% by end of period 5 (28 August) which equates to £202,305. As of today 15 September, we are at £231,957.38 – 42% of spend. The next target is £300,724 by end of October

Our achievement rate is an impressive 92.7% which is 17% above the overall target of 75%.

6. Update on Research

a. Marine Sciences

Publications:

Harlow L, Ovchinnikova K, James M (2025) Neural network-based identification for scallops (*Pecten maximus*) in natural marine habitats. PLoS One 20(7): e0327824

“Guiding Marine Restoration and Enhancement in the Shetland Islands” funded via Marine Fund Scotland under the Scottish Government’s Delivering Scotland’s Blue Economy Vision. The document was officially endorsed as a United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development Decade Activity, acknowledging its contribution to global efforts for a healthy and sustainable ocean.

UHI Shetland, in partnership with the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area (DR MPA) Executive Steering Group, have released a report detailing the findings from a dedicated benthic survey conducted in September 2024 and subsequent updated predictive modelling.

Grants:

Name	Project	Funder	Amount	Date of award
Rebecca Giester	INNS	Royal Society of Edinburgh	£4,898.00	26/06/2025
Emily Hague	SeaSound Sea Changers	Sea Changers	£5,529.00	11/07/2025
Emily Hague	Rissos Dolphins	NatureScot	£1,500.00	15/08/2025
Rachel Shucksmith	Shellvolution - Interactive Mapping	Shellvolution	£26,600.00	19/09/2025
Emily Hague	Risso's Dolphin	SMEEF	£21,618.00	23/09/2025
Rachel Shucksmith	Shetland marine mammal memories	SMEEF	£22,568.12	23/09/2025
Rachel Shucksmith	Shetland PMF and baseline restoration habitat surveys	SMEEF	£24,925.83	23/09/2025
Rachel Shucksmith	Paddleboard training	SMEEF	£855.00	23/09/2025
Rachel Shucksmith	Shetland PM biotope coding	SMEEF	£6,421.53	23/09/2025

Activities:

“Sea Sense: Biodiversity and Stewardship in Shetland Waters” 10/6/25

Researchers at UHI Shetland led the submission of two proposals for Important Shark and Ray Areas, one for flapper skate in the Fair Isle area and another focussed on thornback ray in the Swarbacks Minn area. These proposals were recently accepted following an external review by an independent panel of experts, composed of individuals recognised by the IUCN Species Survival Commission Shark Specialist Group (SSG).

Fisheries team have completed the survey work for the 2025 Fair Isle fish survey. Data collection for the inshore fish survey around Shetland is on-going and due to be finished by mid-October.

As survey season wraps up, the main focus over the next couple of months will be on compiling results and writing reports for the sandeel survey, Fair Isle fish survey and Shetland inshore fish survey.

Fisheries team have been carrying out biological sampling of blue whiting and herring as part of the pelagic co-sampling scheme. The fishing season for mackerel is due to start soon, during which we will continue sampling for mackerel as part of the scheme

As part of the SMEEF project, seagrass planting has commenced (as part of SMEEF project). Additional SMEEF project funding secured in principle (to start Q2)

Scotland wide non-native species survey commenced

The HAB Cast project was completed (UHI AIEF funded). This project developed a novel forecasting model to predict HAB events (based on environmental data, oceanographic models and plankton counts using Bayesian statistics). It is showing promising results, and the project is set to continue through an EU funded project that includes Seafood Shetland ("OCCAM").

As part of the Aqua-Plankton and Plankton-Predict project a multi-instrument payload has now been deployed at the fish farm (IFCB, Holocam and a CTD sonde). After much effort, the instruments are now operational on the profiling winch and relaying data to cloud dashboards in real-time. The initial images from Holocam are good and indicate the larger image sensor is imaging [transparent] micro jellyfish.

b. Centre for Island Creativity

Publications:

Roxane Permar has contributed a chapter 'I live here!' to the recently published book *Socially Engaged Art and Ethics: Power, Politics and Participation*, edited by Anthony Schrag and published by Routledge this summer.

Roxanne Permar: Bloodlines, a new collection of five short films (published May 2025) and exhibited in Nesna, Norway

Roxanne Permar: 'Grounded in Shetland' published in the Collection 'Community Arts' for the Museum of Unrest

Andrew Jennings: Island Innovation Policy Brief 'From Periphery to Powerhouse: A New Policy Paradigm for Scotland's Islands' [From Periphery to Powerhouse: A New Policy Paradigm for Scotland's Islands](#)

Grants:

Grants: Andrew Jennings began a UHI Creative Economy Challenge Fund project exploring the history of the Bressay Stone. The report will feed into projects by CIC and Centre for Tourism Research being conducted for Bressay History Group

Malcolm Innes began a £7,500 Innovation Voucher funded project to redesign the Bressay Heritage Centre to create a new display about the Bressay Stone to feature interactive digital projection.

Roxane Permar: Northern Connections: Engaging young people in rural Arctic societies in building sustainability across borders with Nord Universitet Nesna (Norway) and University of Lapland (Finland); successful funding bid from the UArctic 2025-2027.

Activities:

Siún Carden presented at University of Aberdeen SIEF Conference June 2025 (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore).

7. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

There has been a fall on sea level steps at Scalloway. The area has been closed off and we are working with the boating club to reopen the facility.

A review of the risk assessment for the use of hot glue guns during the bridge building competition has been carried out with additional measures introduced to improve safety.

Following inspections of Lerwick campus in respect of chemical storage, work is underway to ensure full compliance with our policies.

Concerns have been raised regarding the safety of running the Moder Dy, leading to a review and the decision to dispose of the vessel and seek a replacement craft.

Following several marine incidents over the summer involving young people, a programme is being developed with a variety of stakeholders for a Maritime Safety event in March.

8. Staff development

Staff development activities are undertaken across the year and are identified in individual review meetings or as cross college initiatives.

Our recent staff development day in August included sessions on sexual harassment (mandatory training), Use of artificial intelligence, Samaritans, Dyslexia, press releases, Records of processing activities (ROPA) and VHF, Man overboard and first aid refreshers,

Saro Saravanan completed SQA External Verifier award in Aquaculture after 12 months intensive training

Gavin Emslie completed a PDA in Renewable Energy through UHI NWH

9. Islands Deal

a. Campus redevelopment

Discussions continue on the full shape of this project.

b. Shell-volution

Shell-volution project underway with first meeting of the Shell-volution Project Board. The first round of tenders have been concluded. The project continues to undertake stakeholder engagement. An update was provided to First Minister for Scotland on his recent visit. Ongoing development of procedures, brand and promotional materials.

c. Talented

Our new Engineering Lecturer, working on TalEndEd project has just started employment. UHI have appointed a new project officer who will be joining soon.

d. Creative Islands and Wellbeing

Seven year project with UHI Shetland leading on the research theme 'Imagining an Island'. Schemes for funding research student fees and a small research and innovation fund will soon be launched.

10. General activities and achievements

a. Student achievement

UHI Shetland's recently published student outcome indicators from the Scottish Funding Council show that yet again there has been an increase in student attainment and our students are leading the way in attainment across Scottish colleges in 2023-24.

[July's figures](#) from the Scottish Funding Council show that 82.8% of students on full time further education courses gained a recognised qualification in academic year 2023-24. Attainment at UHI Shetland is now 15.7% higher than the Scottish average of 67.1%. This has increased steadily from 76.6% in the first year of the merged UHI Shetland's operations in 2021-22.

Attainment for part time further education courses is also excellent, with 95.5% of students on part time courses gaining a recognised qualification.

Marie Melnychuk (Siún Carden) completed her MRes Creative Practice.

In Heath, Care and Society schools programme pupils – Foundation Apprentice Children & Young People completed a block of placement in June in a variety of ELC and school settings. Access to Nursing + Access to Allied Health & Care students all successfully completed child/adult protection training and began placements in a range of health and social care settings by end Aug 25.

b. Staff achievement

Matthew Wright has been re-appointed as teaching co-ordinator for UHI Aquaculture HUB

A successful graduation ceremony was held in August with over 100 UHI Shetland students celebrating across two ceremonies at Mareel. Captain Calum Grains, Chief Executive of the Lerwick Port Authority, was our guest speaker and Rachel Baronet, recent teaching graduate, delivered the student speech. Vicki Nairn, Principal and Vice Chancellor at the University of the Highlands and Islands joined UHI Shetland staff and students to celebrate their achievements.

Several special awards were given today:

- Helen Budge MBE received an Honorary Doctorate, in recognition of her outstanding service to education, children and families in Shetland.
- **Raymond Smith**, Hospitality Lecturer received a UHI Vice Chancellor's Award, for his dedication to inclusive education.
- A UHI Vice Chancellor's Award was also awarded to **Isobel Johnson**, Finance Manager at UHI Shetland, in recognition of her exceptional service and dedication.
- **Tegan Patterson** was awarded a prestigious Sporting Blue from the Highlands and Islands Students Association.

We were delighted to welcome First Minister for Scotland, John Swinney MSP, to UHI Shetland's Scalloway Campus. The visit of the First Minister afforded UHI Shetland the opportunity to showcase the Centre for Sustainable Seafood and the First Minister heard about the Centre's development of strong relationships and collaboration with a range of key stakeholders who work in the marine environment and their communities. Staff were keen to demonstrate the exciting potential of this research centre with Mr Swinney, and how the Centre will utilise the knowledge and expertise of these partners to co-create research, gather data and inform policy that is grounded in real-world knowledge and experience.

Maritime / Engineering / Aquaculture staff welcomed a group from the Danish Board of Education of Fisherman in Denmark along with Representative from Shetland Fisherman's Association to Scalloway Campus.

Senior academics from Krakow University visited the Scalloway campus to discuss collaboration as part of a UHI partnership visit.