

# UHI Shetland Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee Meeting, Quarter 1, 2025-2026

Wednesday 17 September 2025, 16:30 - 18:30

Teams

## Attendees

### Chair

- Valerie Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee)

### Prescribed Board Members

- Simon Clarke (Teaching Staff Director)
- Harley Green (Student Director)

### Other Board Members

- Andrew Garrick (Vice Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee)
- Andrew Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff), Absent from 1-4)
- Absent: Daniel Lawson (Independent Director) John Goodlad (Independent Director)

### Ex-Officio

- Jane Lewis (Principal - Shetland UHI)

### Management Team Member

- Kevin Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover))

### Staff In Attendance

- Matt Sierocinski King (Board Secretary)

### In Attendance

- Stephen Leask (Chair of the Board of Management, Chair of Search and Nominations Committee, Absent from 7-14)

### Apologies

- Karen Hall (Senior Independent Member, Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee)

Meeting minutes

## Opening Items

### 1. Welcome, Apologies, and Announcements

Ms Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and explained that she was chairing this meeting, as Ms Hall (Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) was unable to attend the meeting.

### **1.1. Welcome to new members**

Ms Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) welcomed Mr Andrew Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff)), and Dr Garrick (Vice Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee) to their first meeting of the Committee.

## **2. \*Terms of Reference**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

Ms Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) asked members of the Committee if they had any conflicts of interest to make with regards to items on the agenda. No such declarations were made.

## **4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Ms Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) asked members to review the minutes of the previous meeting for matters of accuracy.

**Decision:** The Committee approved the minutes as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

## **5. Matters Arising**

The Committee noted the one outstanding action.

Mr Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff)) joined the meeting during this agenda item. The meeting became inquorate at this point, but had no further decisions on its agenda to make.

**Action:** The Committee shall draft a statement on behalf of the Board of Management with regards to the success of the Student Director's delivery throughout the previous academic year.

## **Scholarship and Research**

There were no Scholarship and Research agenda items in this meeting.

## **Student Experience**

## **6. Section Presentation including Research - Creative Communities**

For this agenda item Dr Clarke (Teaching Staff Director) was not present as a Director, but was present as Head of Section for Creative Communities.

Dr Clarke (Head of Section for Creative Communities) introduced the Section to the Committee, and announced the staff who make up the section for each subject area that is covered by the section, and working at different levels. He spoke about the 2 classes delivered as part of the Eric Grey service, following by Skills for Work for Academy, NC, and SVQ qualifications. He also spoke about the delivery of Core Skills courses. He moved on to speak about HNC and degree level courses in the subjects of Music, Film Making, Fine Art, Creative Writing, and Archaeology. He spoke about the delivery formats of the courses and the challenges when teaching was delivered in hybrid formats. He moved on to speak about PG courses in turn, which cover the subjects of Viking Studies, Orkney and Shetland Studies, Island Studies, Art and Social Practice, Music and the Environment, as well as Archaeology. He also spoke about the benefits of online delivery and how advantageous it was for reaching international students. The Head of Section for Creative Communities highlighted the MRes and PhD qualifications both by thesis and by practice, in the subjects of Archaeology, Intangible Heritage, Film Making, Creative Writing, Boat Building. He also confirmed that he ran the UHI Viva's training until 2025.

The Head of Section for Creative Communities moved on to speak about the research that has been undertaken in the section, and how it is undertaken by 5 different members of staff, with site research dating back around 1000 years. He spoke in detail about the poetry delivered by Dr Siun Carden who is an Anthropologist and winner of the New Writer Award in 2024. The Head of Section for Creative Communities commended her creative talents to the committee.

The Head of Section for Creative Communities spoke to the Committee about the downsizing of the Section, noting the section only has 18 staff, some of which are part time. He also spoke about the discontinued Textile Facilitation Unit (TFU) and discontinued courses, and the closure of community learning centres.

The Committee discussed the presentation with questions around staff cohort challenges, to which the Head of Section for Creative Communities highlighted the zero wiggle room when there are staff absences, noting that there was very little room for manoeuvre. Mr Green (Student Director) spoke about how the presentation had vastly expanded his understanding of the section, and highlighted how this had expanded his thoughts in the context of the Board workshop discussions on financial recovery. Mr Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff)) highlighted the critical importance of the section in delivering on the colleges' Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and how students' life chances are increased as a result of the sections' work. The Head of Section for Creative Communities spoke about the core skill modules that the section delivers to students of all courses. He added his own testimony of how students' life chances are advanced by the core skills modules.

Mr Leask (Chair of the Board of Management) left towards the end of this agenda item.

## **7. 2025 Induction Update**

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover)) spoke about the inductions delivered in 2025 at both Lerwick and Scalloway, and online. He spoke about the stakeholders involved, noting that there were enrolments on the day, highlighting of policies, and a guide for students.

There was no further discussion on this matter.

## **8. Student Surveys - NSS and PTES**

This agenda item was taken after agenda item 9.

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover)) gave a UHI partnership wide presentation on the 2025 NSS results, highlighting that UHI ranked 4th in Scotland on overall satisfaction at 86%, up from 81%, but noted that response rate fell from 71% to 64%. He confirmed that the Shetland UHI cohort was not big enough to have distinctive results, as it was less than 10.

The Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover) moved on to speak about the 2025 UHI wide PTES results, with UHI ranking 1st in Scotland for the 4th year in a row, and 7th in the UK. He confirmed that overall satisfaction in 2025 was 91 up from 88. All the section results had increased when compared to 2024. He moved on to speak about actions to increase its scores in both surveys with a focus on community.

The Committee discussed the presentation, with Mr Green (Student Director) gave his thoughts and focusing on the work on HISA in developing communities. Professor Lewis (Principal) spoke to the effectiveness of the results, and spoke about the special interest she had paid to community development. Dr Clarke (Teaching Staff Director) noted that a very high proportion of the PG courses are delivered only online, and highlighted this as a positive direction of UHI, and argued that community was a perhaps an area of weaker importance for PTES students.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the presentation.

## **Performance Monitoring**

### **9. 2023-2024 PIs Status update**

This agenda item was taken after agenda item 7.

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover)) gave the Committee highlights of the PIs, and drew the Committee's attention to where they were published on the website, focusing on the very high attainment rates and completion rates.

The Committee discussed the good news, on attainment success courses. Professor Lewis (Principal) highlighted that the personalised nature of the teaching delivered at Shetland UHI was a possible cause along with the staff support that is delivered from management to staff, and in turn from staff to students. Dr Clarke (Teaching Staff Director) felt that students who are enrolled, are students who want to undertake their studies. Mr Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff)) queried as to why there might have been an improvement. The Principal confirmed that there had been an upward trend on attainment since merger. Dr Garrick (Vice Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee) queried whether there were trends that identified a success in

Shetland UHI where some courses were networked taught, along with queries around marking approaches.

## 10. 2024-2025 Final Student Numbers

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover)) gave the final student numbers from 2024-2025. He highlighted that the numbers were:

- Full Time Further Education enrolments: 104
- Part Time Further Education enrolments: 1951
- Full Time Higher Education students: 100
- Part Time Higher Education students: 189

The total Credits recorded were: 4267

He spoke about the recruitment targets which were:

| Targets                                                                                               | 2024-2025 | 2025-2026 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Total Undergraduate non-controlled, including Graduate Apprentices and Teaching Qualifications</b> | 126.4     | 122.6     |
| <b>Undergraduate non-controlled Full Time Equivalent excluding Graduate Apprentices</b>               | 124.4     | 115.4     |
| <b>Total Post Graduate non-controlled</b>                                                             | 35        | 8.75      |

He also spoke about short courses, including their resulting income to Shetland UHI.

Professor Lewis (Principal) gave her thoughts on last year's figures

## 11. Risk 1 and Risk 2 - FE Recruitment and HE Recruitment

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover)) introduced the risks, and spoke to the Committee about the impact, causes and owner. He moved on to speak about the actions to minimise the risk.

He then detailed the figures of enrolments which stood at

- Full Time Further Education: 65
- Part Time Further Education: 543
- Full Time Higher Education: 111
- Part Time Higher Education: 156

He confirmed the targets were 3902 FE Credits, and 115 FTE Undergraduates.

The Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover) moved on to speak about short courses, detailing the number of courses, candidates, and income from fees for the last four academic years. He noted the increased uptake of short courses and spoke to the Committee about the possible reasons behind the uptake.

The Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover) spoke to the Committee about the regular actions that were being undertaken to minimise the risk, and reported the following risk levels to the Committee:

- Risk 1 (Higher Education recruitment) pre-action: 12
- Risk 1 (Higher Education recruitment) post-action: 9
- Risk 2 (Further Education recruitment) pre-action: 3
- Risk 2 (Further Education recruitment) post-action 3

The Committee discussed the risk. Mr Green (Student Director) spoke about how flat out the staff are with many working beyond their contracted hours, highlighting the stretched staff resources. The Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover) and Dr Clarke (Teaching Staff Director) responded. Mr Anderson (Trade Union Director (Teaching Staff)) spoke about the additional working of staff and the challenges it was posing, along with detailing how staff were spending their staff. The Depute Principal Tertiary (Maternity Cover) responded. The Committee discussed the matter further, including on community engagement opportunities.

## 12. Student Attendance Policy

Mr Briggs (Depute Principal Tertiary - Maternity Leave Cover) highlighted the policy for information to the Committee, and explained that the policy was already in force.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the Student Attendance Policy.

## Closing Items

### 13. Any Other Business

Mr Green (Student Director) confirmed that the welcome week report will come in full at the next meeting of the Committee, and gave some verbal highlights as to what had happened so far.

Mr Green (Student Director) drew the Committee's attention to the low numbers of Directors present at Welcome Week events, with just Mr Leask (Chair of the Board of Management), present, despite agreement at the last meeting for Directors to be present. Dr Clarke (Teaching Staff Director) apologised for his lack of attendance due to commitment clashes, but wished to pass on the gratitude of Eric Grey students to the Student Director for the efforts put on by HISA in their welcome week activities.

The Committee gave thanks to Ms Nicolson (Vice Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research Committee) for chairing the meeting as Ms Hall (Chair of Learning, Teaching, and Research

Committee) had given her apologies, being unable to attend due to an unavoidable work commitment.

## 14. Dates of Next Meetings

The dates of next meetings are:

- Wednesday 5th November 2025 at 16:30 on Teams
- Wednesday 18th February 2026 at 16:30 on Teams
- Wednesday 20th May 2026 at 16:30 on Teams

| Agenda Item | Action                                                                                                                                                       | Responsible   | Progress |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 5           | Draft a statement on behalf of the Board of Management with regards to the success of the Student Director's delivery throughout the previous academic year. | The Committee |          |