



Annual Business Plan 2024-25

Where learning means more

Foreword



This business plan sets out the high-level priorities for 2024-25 for the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to progress the commitments in our Strategic Plan 2030. These priorities are reflected in department plans which provide more detail and include further key actions identified within each functional area. The business plan builds on some notable recent achievements:

- + 6th in Scotland for overall student satisfaction in the National Student Survey – surpassing our 2023 benchmark and the Scottish average.
- + 'Best in Scotland' for overall student satisfaction in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 for the third year in a row.
- + Positive review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Scotland with commendation for our student support and quality assurance.
- + Success in the Scottish Knowledge Exchange awards with UHI claiming two of the seven projects recognised.
- + Launch of UHI Island Strategy 2024-2029.
- + £1.2m package of corporate funding secured for UHI STEM Outreach Programme through our ScotWind industry partnership, recognised in the Scottish Green Energy Awards 2023.
- + Formal strategic partnership launched between UHI and SSE to support our regions.

Strategic Plan 2030



Mission

To have a transformational impact on the prospects of our region, its economy, its people and its communities.

Vision

We will attract, nurture and retain talent in our communities through the innovative delivery of accessible lifelong learning, job skills and impactful research, supporting innovation and social and economic prosperity. We will do this through the innovative delivery of flexible lifelong learning focused on employability and skills and impactful research.

We will become

A destination of choice for learners by responding to the regional needs of our communities and businesses and through developing our national and global positioning in curriculum and research areas of strength.

A partner of choice for regional employers and stakeholders and more widely through expanding relevant national and global collaborations.

An employer of choice where people are valued, supported and celebrated as one of our greatest assets.

Underpinned by operational excellence, the academic partners of UHI will think, plan and act as one in delivering on our mission and vision.



This business plan is however set against a backdrop of deep, externally driven change, impacting institutions across the education sector and causing significant financial uncertainty. Delivery against our business plan for 2024-25 will require actions to mitigate the risks in our operating environment. We need to evolve how we work so that we can meet immediate financial and other challenges and sustain success for the long term. We must target our efforts wisely and by focusing on our priorities we can free up resource for what matters most: supporting staff and students so they can do their best work.

UHI integrated planning and performance framework

The annual business plan is a key component of the planning and performance framework, articulating the actions needed to progress our 2030 strategic ambitions. The framework connects the various elements of our planning cycle to:

- Translate strategic commitments into targets, plans and actions,
- Integrate planning, risk, budgetary and investment processes,
- Enable meaningful performance management to demonstrate progress on strategic commitments and the 'health' of the institution.



Integrated sets of performance measures will be based around:

- Strategic priority indicators (SPIs): high-level institutional measures relating to the 2030 plan, assuring Court and others of progress towards our strategic ambitions.
- Key performance indicators: measures relating to key areas of partnership operational efficiency reported at partner level.
- Institutional health indicators: sector measures used by funders to assess performance, compliance and funding allocations.

Performance will be reported to Court on an annual basis.

UHI Strategic Plan 2030

Mission, vision and strategic direction

Teaching,
learning and
student support

Research and
innovation
impact

Enterprise
and growth

Environmental
sustainability

Operational
excellence

Focused strategies

Learning and
teaching
enhancement

Curriculum

Student
experience and
support

Gaelic
language

Research,
impact and
knowledge
exchange

Economic
development

Student
recruitment and
admissions

Advancement

Sustainability

Financial
sustainability

People and
culture

Equality,
diversity and
inclusion

Digital

Annual business plan

Faculty/department plans

Employee personal development review (PDR)

Risk management

Performance management framework

Teaching, learning and support

Our strategic commitments

- + To deliver a high-quality connected curriculum built on personalising the learner journey, giving more choices and opportunities to more people.
- + Increasing our reputation and reach through our distinctive curriculum, partnerships with business and industry, innovative delivery and student experience and success.

Progress to date

To support the delivery of a more coherent provision, a review of academic structures has been completed resulting in the creation of two new faculties and six cognate subject groups with a tertiary remit. The new faculties are focused on enhancements in strategic and operational approaches to decision making in curriculum planning and alignment with regional and national skills and employment.

We are going into the third year of the UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy and enhancement initiatives to date have included learning analytics, curriculum design and development, and AI,

along with professional development and recognition opportunities. The Quality Assurance Agency has completed a Quality Enhancement and Standards Review published in July 2024 expressing confidence in UHI's academic standards and quality, and of our staff focused professional development provision in learning and teaching. Further external quality review will be linked to the new tertiary quality arrangements.

Supporting our students' mental health and wellbeing remains a priority and has seen increasing demand. The UHI and HISA Student Partnership Agreement is now well established and recognised alongside wider student representation opportunities. UHI is now seeing consistently strong performance across all levels of student satisfaction surveys.



Teaching, learning and support

High-level institutional priority developments

Theme	Operational priorities	Impact	Lead owner(s)	Risk register*
Curriculum	Implement a collective, cross partnership curriculum planning cycle	Evidence-based, decision-making supporting delivery of our tertiary curriculum strategy and cultural and economic impact for our regions	Faculty Deans Dean of Learning, Teaching and Students	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>
	Optimise opportunities from the Green Freeport and wider energy sector by aligning curriculum with market needs	Increased income generation and recruitment from significant regional investment potential	Faculty Deans	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>
Learning and teaching enhancement	Implement mechanisms for engagement in the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework	Compliance with sectoral and institutional quality review, reporting and enhancement processes	Dean of Learning, Teaching and Students	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>
Student enhancement	Progress the action plan for the student retention strategy	Improved student retention and associated increase in funding income	Dean of Learning, Teaching and Students	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>

*High-level institution risk register (see page 16)

Research and innovation impact

Our strategic commitments

- + To enhance our research impact, ensuring it is internationally ranked, industry linked and world leading.
- + Increasing our national and international reputation through research and innovation excellence and broadening our fields of research in emerging areas of strength which are regionally focused with global reach.



Progress to date

The key driver for research excellence and innovation impact will be UHI's engagement with and response to Scotland's National Innovation Strategy and the available funding streams. The environment for securing grant income is challenging, which has been increasingly the case since Brexit, and has had a particularly significant impact on UHI. Research quality and volume is critical to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), while UHI had a good performance in the REF 2021, our score on research environment in particular fell from the previous exercise in 2014. A plan for longer-term investment in our research culture and environment has been developed to support our REF performance given the increased emphasis on this element in the next review. We have also been engaging with changes in funding and reporting from the Scottish Funding Council including the new Outcome Framework and Accountability Model and the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund which replaces the University Innovation Fund.



Research and innovation impact

High-level institutional priority developments

Theme	Operational priorities	Impact	Lead owner(s)	Risk register*
Excellence and impact	Develop a new UHI Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation strategy and plan	Motivating and inclusive strategy widely endorsed by staff across the partnership	Dean of Research and Innovation	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>
	Refine the REF 29 submission strategy and monitoring process	Progress towards a robust submission, including internal and external quality assessments	Dean of Research and Innovation	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>
Research environment	Progress investment plan to build a strong and sustainable research base, culture and environment aligned with REF 29 and the Strategic Plan 2030	High levels of engagement with the strategy and researcher development activities with positive evaluations supporting REF assessment	Dean of Research and Innovation	<div> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> <div>7</div> <div>8</div> <div>9</div> <div>10</div> <div>11</div> <div>12</div> <div>13</div> </div>

*High-level institution risk register (see page 16)

Enterprise and growth

Our strategic commitments

- + To embrace an entrepreneurial spirit based on strong economic growth for our institution and our communities, growing and diversifying our student population, delivering innovation, employability and enterprise skills and supporting innovation.
- + Increasing recognition of our position as an anchor institution supporting our communities, developing skills and knowledge-led solutions and influencing regional and national policy.

Progress to date

There are significant economic opportunities for our region in the energy sector, particularly around the Green Freeport and ScotWind, and from investments through Growth Deals. UHI has developed a range of strategic industry partnerships which have secured funding for students, work in schools, capital equipment, as well as opportunities to access funding for curriculum and skills development.

However, we are continuing to experience challenges with student numbers and associated income streams. The impact of external challenges such as the COVID pandemic, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis is still being seen in applicant and student behaviours. While there has since been a strong recovery in further education, reduced credits and flat-cash funding settlements now constrain our ability to continue to meet demand and labour market challenges in key sectors in a financially sustainable way. Engagement is continuing with the Scottish Funding Council presenting a case for additional credits and flexibilities. In higher education, the increased competition within the sector requires review of our curriculum offering and marketing and recruitment strategies.



Enterprise and growth

High-level institutional priority developments

Theme	Operational priorities	Impact	Lead owner(s)	Risk register*
Income diversification	Secure and develop strategic industry partnerships and access to funding opportunities	Increased fund-raising and industry associations	Director of Economic Development and Advancement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
	Identify and implement wider commercial and income generation opportunities	Increased commercial income	Chief Financial Officer Senior management team	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
Economic development	Invest in resource to maximise access to industry funds and other opportunities from the energy sector and Green Freeport, including commercial options to secure additional training demand	Increased income generation and recruitment from significant regional investment potential	Director of Economic Development and Advancement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
	Enhance Growth Deal stakeholder management and delivery of outputs	Increased regional reputation and optimised funding and impact from projects	Director of Economic Development and Advancement Director of Transformation and Business Planning	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
Student recruitment and international	Develop a student residence strategy	Agreed approach to secure a sustainable future for student residences	Director of Physical and Digital Infrastructure	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
	Invest in identified student growth priorities in recruitment, admissions, data and market intelligence and progression	Step change in student growth approaches beyond current plans and funding	Interim Director of Student Recruitment and Admission	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
Engagement	Develop and implement a comprehensive political/ stakeholder engagement plan that includes a focus on Gaelic	Enhanced leadership and influence in higher and further education and our regions	Interim Head of Corporate Communications Director of Economic Development and Advancement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

*High-level institution risk register (see page 16)

Environmental sustainability

Our strategic commitments

- + To be a sustainable and socially responsible institution, contributing to the sustainability of our communities, our economy and our planet.
- + Increasing awareness of our central and transformational role in decarbonising the economy and progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in our communities and beyond.



Progress to date

In June 2023 Court approved the UHI Sustainability Strategy 2023-2030 and new Sustainability Policy. An implementation group has been created to drive forward action and change comprising managers and representatives from estates, facilities, finance and procurement, academics, Green Champions Network and Highlands and Islands Students' Association.

Building on progress to date and illustrating our ongoing commitment to facing up to the climate and ecological emergencies, we are considering a range of initiatives. These include areas such as climate risks and adaptation, biodiversity, learning and teaching, knowledge exchange and research.

Environmental sustainability

High-level institutional priority developments

Theme	Operational priorities	Impact	Lead owner(s)	Risk register*
Skills, curriculum and research	Develop a plan for skills development to support renewable energy sector through our graduates and provision at all levels	Increased recruitment and income generation from significant regional investment potential	Faculty Deans	1 2 3 4
				5 6 7 8
				9 10 11 12
				13
Net zero and just transition	Identification and management of climate risks	Adaptation to climate change. Increasing and improving resilience	Sustainability Manager	1 2 3 4
				5 6 7 8
				9 10 11 12
				13
	Deliver on opportunities from the Net Zero Hub through closer alignment between academics, research and knowledge exchange	Maximise value and outputs from net zero projects and institutional profile	Deans Sustainability Manager	1 2 3 4
				5 6 7 8
				9 10 11 12
				13
	Increase awareness and access to relevant strategic funding support for carbon reduction projects	With increased funding – improved compliance and reduction of liability and exposure	Sustainability Manager	1 2 3 4
				5 6 7 8
				9 10 11 12
				13

*High-level institution risk register (see page 16)

Operational excellence

Our strategic commitments

- + To be a fully integrated, sustainable and people-oriented organisation.
- + Increasing recognition of UHI as a financially sustainable, well managed organisation by funders and stakeholders.



Progress to date

Following on from the UHI2024 programme of change, an Outline Business Case has been drafted which is the formal beginning of our journey to developing a new operating model. Work will continue throughout the strategic plan period including regular engagement with partners, stakeholders and funders. The new operating model will address the financial challenges affecting UHI and the sector. Work has also been continuing to review and improve finance mechanisms, monitoring and income generation.

Taking forward our vision to be an employer of choice, work has also started on people and culture strategies and associated processes within executive office and in liaison with partners.

Operational excellence

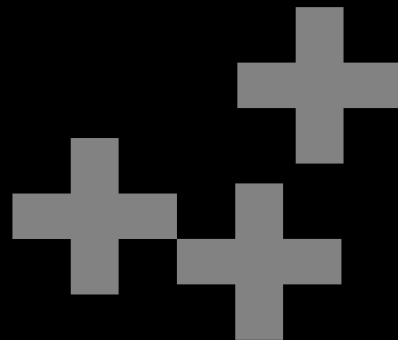
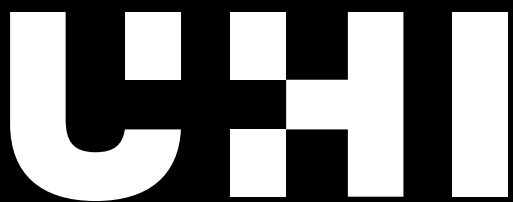
High-level institutional priority developments

Theme	Operational priorities	Impact	Lead owner(s)	Risk register*
Structure, governance and shared services	Implement the Scottish Funding Council's new Outcome Framework and Accountability Model	Compliance with statutory requirements and optimising funding and profile opportunities		<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Implement partnership performance management framework	Collective, evidence-based assessment of performance across the strategic priorities		<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Progress a UHI data strategy	A more structured and strategic approach to data as a key institutional asset		<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Implement improved financial monitoring and reporting including for Executive Office and the Regional Strategic Body	Improved financial control, transparency and regulatory compliance	Director of Finance	<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Complete a full business case to support the UHI operating model transformation and required investment	Certainty on an operating model that enhances our ability to deliver effectively. Release of transformation funding from the Scottish Funding Council	Director of Transformation and Business Planning	<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
People and culture	Develop talent management and succession planning processes and resources	Increased organisational stability, continuity and adaptability. Enhanced cost efficiency and risk mitigation	Director of Strategy, People and Culture	<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Develop an employee experience strategy and plan	Increased employee satisfaction and motivation. Enhanced employee attraction and retention		<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
	Develop a new workload model and planning process for Executive Office academic staff including protected research time	Increased efficiency and visibility of the use of academic staff resource	Deans Director of Strategy, People and Culture Interim Director of Finance	<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>
Physical and digital excellence	Refresh the IT/Digital Strategy	Understanding of the activities and costs associated with delivering UHI's information technology and cybersecurity environment over the next 5 years	Director of Physical and Digital Infrastructure	<div>1 2 3 4</div> <div>5 6 7 8</div> <div>9 10 11 12</div> <div>13</div>

*High-level institution risk register (see page 16)

High-level institutional risk register

<p>1</p> <p>Risk Institution does not achieve higher education student number targets</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Risk Institution does not achieve further education credit targets</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Risk Institution has a poor reputation</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Risk Disruption to services resulting from loss of key staff member</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Risk Non-compliance with statutory regulations</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Risk Governance failure</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Risk Financial failure</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Risk Institutional estate is not fit for purpose</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Risk Academic quality is sub-standard</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Risk Poor student experience</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Risk Research outputs are sub-standard</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Risk Institutional, personal, and sensitive data breach or disruption to services</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Risk Failure to act appropriately and timeously in relation to climate emergency</p>			



UHI partnership

UHI Argyll

UHI Inverness

UHI Moray

UHI North, West and Hebrides

UHI Orkney

UHI Perth

UHI Shetland

HTC

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Scottish Association for Marine Science

Three large, grey, stylized plus signs are arranged in a triangular pattern on the left side of the page, mirroring the ones in the top right.

Where learning means more

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