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Final Version Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held on Friday 13 March 2026, 10am – 12.30pm

Via MS Teams

Quorum: 8 members (min. 6 Independent), and a majority Non-Executive

Present: B Buchanan-Smith (BB), B Sizeland (BS), H Stevenson (HS), I Jurgensen (IJ), J Dow (JD), J Wright (JW), K Roake (KR), L Neilson (LN), M Coleman (MC), M Tierney (MT) Chair, N Tyler (NT), P Wylie (PW), S Easton (SE)

Apologies: C Walsh (CW), C Ward (CWD)

In Attendance: A Blakey (AB), A Close (AEC)

No.	Item	Action
26.1.01	Welcome and apologies MT welcomed everyone to the Board meeting. Apologies were noted as above. It was noted that MC will need to leave the meeting at 12pm.	
26.1.02	Declarations of interest & to identify any items deemed confidential There were no declarations of interest or items deemed confidential.	
26.1.03	Minutes of previous meetings: a. Draft Minutes of Board Meeting – 12 December 2025 b. Draft RESERVED Minutes of Board Meeting – 12 December 2025 Both sets of minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meetings. Board Secretary to publish item a.	AB
26.1.04	Outstanding Actions - Finalise action plan from Wbg and UHI RSB reviews (JW & MT) – covered in 26.1.12 i). - Add RAG rating to Board Dashboard (AEC) – The Board agreed to close this action, as coding the dashboard in a meaningful way has proven challenging. - Add social media guidance to Emergency Management and Business Continuity Plan (AEC/MM) – covered in item 26.1.31 ii). - Arrange fraud prevention training for Board Members for early 2026 (AB) - The Board were asked whether they would prefer a half day training session or a	

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	shorter session of under one hour. Members were in favour of the shorter option. AEC to progress arrangements with the auditors.	AEC
26.1.05	Matters arising (<i>not covered elsewhere in agenda</i>) i. Transformation Feedback – initial analysis & next steps Feedback was grouped into key themes, along with individual feedback specific to Argyll. It was noted that we are currently in the process of sharing the findings with partner organisations. MT and JW attended a summit on Wednesday – an update will be provided in the Chairs/Principals update. ii. UHI Argyll Strategic Plan – 2026 - 2030 SMT have developed the early stages of a strategic plan. While the document is currently quite operational in nature, it provides a helpful overview of the business. It does, however, require a Board level perspective. A draft paper has been prepared, and the Board’s input is welcomed in order to shape a full version for June. JW noted that the update provided at Wednesday’s Transformation summit may have an impact on the plan.	
26.1.06	Chairs Report: overview of activity and key issues 1.Transformation Summit JW and MT attended the summit in Inverness on Wednesday, where it was confirmed that UHI have delayed their submission to the Scottish Government until December 2026. Option 6 (the merger option) is now off the table as it is not politically viable. Work will now focus on an enhanced Option 3, though how this will deliver the required savings remains unclear. Max Brown will develop a revised model within six weeks, identifying a potential shared services focus and outlining further efficiencies and income opportunities. A partnership contract may follow to hold partners accountable to the new approach. UHI are preparing a statement for Scottish Parliament ahead of the evidence session on 24th March. The Board Secretary will circulate this for approval by correspondence, and the final version will form the basis of an updated staff communication. MT emphasised the need for confidentiality regarding Option 6 being withdrawn, as this represents significant news for staff until UHI issue official communications. Concerns were raised about the role of the RSB, with a view that it is not currently fulfilling its function to the satisfaction of partners.	AB

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Members also discussed the implications of Option 6 being removed, noting that the impact on UHI Argyll is more complex than for other APs and will influence strategic planning.

AEC highlighted concerns around income generation, noting that while encouraged, it cannot replace core funding. Audit Scotland is now also questioning colleges on income generation.

The Board asked whether UHI had indicated any post-election scenarios. JW advised that, regardless of the composition of the new Parliament, parties are unlikely to seek confrontation with trade unions.

Members welcomed the clarity that Option 6 is no longer being pursued, noting that staff will be relieved. However, it was noted that this introduces a new period of uncertainty and will influence how UHI Argyll determines its strategic direction.

2. Strategic Planning Day

The Board discussed the need to refocus strategic planning in light of the changing Transformation Programme and the requirement to develop a clear strategy for UHI Argyll. It was agreed to arrange a full-day, in-person strategic planning session. The Board Secretary will issue a Doodle poll to identify availability, with proposed dates in April or mid-May.

AB

3. Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee met yesterday to begin the recruitment process for the new Principal. Members were keen to progress at pace, with the aim of securing a two-month crossover period to support effective handover.

It was noted that several members of the Senior Management Team are likely to retire in the near future. The Board acknowledged the importance of planning for this operationally and ensuring that the Principal recruitment aligns with wider SMT succession planning.

4. F&GP Committee Chair

It was noted that LN would be the new Chair of the F&GP Committee.

5. Chair Reviews

MT has undertaken mid-year reviews with JW and AB. End-of-year reviews will take place in June. MT welcomed feedback from other Board members if they wanted to contribute.

6. Meet the Board Session

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	The recent online Meet the Board session for staff was noted. General feedback from staff has been very positive and it is hoped that similar sessions might be held in the future. 7. Board Induction Induction for new members is ongoing. Dates are being sought for introductory meetings with Senior Management Team.	
26.1.07	Principal's Update JW invited Members to read the Strategic Plan in detail. SMT's current thinking is to undertake a series of thematic reviews across different areas of the college. An estates and schools review have both been completed, and an FE review will be presented to LTE in June. The emerging strategy will therefore have a stronger operational focus than previous versions. Next week, SMT will meet with staff to outline strategic thinking to date. JW emphasised that income generation will not be a major revenue source, and that the priority is to maximise educational provision. The paper has been shared with the Board for review and discussion in their own time. JW highlighted a loose end from the financial sustainability review, noting the need for additional monitoring of activity in smaller centres. Each staff departure presents an opportunity to reconsider the operating model, and SMT are exploring a move towards term-time operations where appropriate. Strengthening the schools/college experience remains a priority, and although location presents challenges, it remains an area worth investing in.	
26.1.08	Board Dashboard March 2026 Paper was noted. Members agreed it was a useful tool for providing a quick, high-level overview of key performance areas.	
26.1.09	Minutes of the previous Audit Committee meeting held on 27 February 2026 The draft minutes were noted.	
26.1.10	i. Internal Audit Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan (approved in 2025) ii. Draft Internal Audit plan for 2025/26 The Board noted that the auditors will focus on curriculum, financial sustainability and corporate governance. As an internal effectiveness review has not been carried out for several years, the Board agreed to use part of the strategic planning day to consider how the Board can strengthen its effectiveness.	
26.1.11	Health and Safety Report – Quarter to 31 Jan 2026	

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	The Board were advised that the Health & Safety & Property Officer has now moved on. An external H&S company has been engaged in the interim, and internal options are being explored to fill the role. Property will be covered by AEC and the Cluster Centre Manager. A brief update was provided on a recent incident.	
26.1.12	Audit AOCB i. Board Action Plan The Board noted the Action Plan as a working document that will continue to evolve. The Audit Committee's request for a bilateral agreement was discussed. JW felt a formal arrangement may be unnecessary, and an informal protocol could instead be developed for consideration at the Strategic Planning Day. Members highlighted the value of clearer guidance on how Board Members can contact SMT and the usefulness of Committee pre-meetings. JW will draft a protocol reflecting these points. The Action Plan was approved as written, with updates expected in due course. ii. Update on Estates/H&S Strategy The paper was noted. iii. UHI Transformation Estates Report The paper was noted.	JW
26.1.13	Minutes of the previous F&GP Committee meeting held on 27 February 2026 The draft minutes were noted.	
26.1.14	Management Accounts to 31 Jan 2026 The forecast indicates a breakeven position for year-end, an improvement on the original budget. The college remains solvent with no immediate sustainability concerns.	
26.1.15	Draft Budget for year to 31 July 2026 and projections for period 31 July 2029 The Board reviewed the draft budget, which assumes a 3% income uplift, full delivery of FE and HE targets, and a 3.4% support staff pay award. SFC confirmed a £250,000 Job Evaluation provision is still required to be set aside, despite implementing a local scheme. No staff reductions are included in the projections, which had previously been anticipated. The Board were asked to approve a deficit budget, noting that the college holds significant reserves to support this position.	

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	The Board approved the deficit budget.	
26.1.16	F&GP AOCB i. SFC Mid Year Return The paper was noted. ii. Dunoon portakabin The paper was noted. iii. Treasury Management Proposal The Board approved the proposal set out in the paper. iv. Rural Growth Deal project & Appendix I The Board agreed to delay the decision for 3-6 months and took the paper as noted.	
26.1.17	Risk Register The Board reviewed the Risk Register and noted several points: • Red-rated risks may need to be revisited, but Members agreed to wait for the forthcoming UHI statement before making changes • A new risk relating to operational sustainability and stability, linked to JW's retirement has been added. The Board will be kept informed as recruitment progresses • The HR Committee now owns a new Job Evaluation risk, reflecting ongoing sector developments	
26.1.18	Draft Minutes of Learning, Teaching & Engagement Committee held on 27 February 2026 The draft minutes were noted.	
26.1.19	Progress towards targets – FE credits and HE FTEs & Withdrawals The paper was noted.	
26.1.20	Schools Curriculum Review The Board noted the review, recognising schools provision as central to UHI Argyll's future strategy. Improvements are needed in quality, location, and learner experience. SE reported that A&BC are open to extending the partnership. In terms of apprenticeships, the college received its full bid this year, whereas historically it has been allocated less than it can fill. Construction apprenticeships	

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	remain challenging due to market conditions and high delivery costs relative to SDS funding.	
26.1.21	Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) 2025 The paper was noted.	
26.1.22	UHI Argyll Draft Academic Calendar 2026-2027 The paper was noted.	
26.1.23	Learning, Teaching and Engagement Update a. SVR approach b. Return to Education c. Training week update d. STEP Activity e. Qualifications Scotland update f. Report on Sem2/Jan start recruitment The paper was noted.	
26.1.24	HISA report The paper was noted.	
26.1.25	Draft Minutes of HR Committee held on 27 February 2026 The draft minutes were noted.	
26.1.26	HR Report The Board noted the HR report, which outlines the full range of HR activity across the college. Work is underway to refine how information is presented so performance can be benchmarked more accurately against other colleges. The significant amount of staff development activity was highlighted. Job Evaluation remains a major and resource-intensive area of work. The procured system will provide an objective assessment of all support staff roles to ensure fair remuneration. JW noted that while unions are not accepting ECC nationally, the college will continue with ECC locally as there is no alternative provider. The Board noted that Job Evaluation is essential for mitigating equal pay risks. All HR policies have been reviewed and updated.	
26.1.27	National Recognitions and Procedures Agreement for the College Sector 2025	

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	a. Summary of Revisions to NRPA Members welcomed the agreement of a revised NRPA, with separate arrangements now established for lecturers and professional services staff. <i>MC left the meeting at 12.04pm.</i>	
26.1.28	Probation Policy The paper was noted.	
26.1.29	References Policy Thep paper was noted.	
26.1.30	Relocation Policy The paper was noted.	
26.1.31	AOCB i. Board & Committee schedule of meetings from August – December 2026 The meeting dates were approved. Board Secretary to update calendar invites. ii. Emergency Management and Business Continuity Plan – Appendix 4 Extract The paper was noted. iii. Student of the Year Awards 2026 The Board were advised that Members will be invited to take part in the judging process for the 2026 Student of the Year Awards. iv. It was noted that JW’s retirement should be treated as confidential at this stage and should not be shared beyond the Board.	AB
26.1.32	Date of next meetings - Committees: 29 May 2026 - Board: 12 June 2026	

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Outstanding Actions

Item	Action	Responsibility	Deadline	Outcome
26.1.03	Board Secretary to publish minutes	AB	Jun 26	Complete
26.1.04	Progress fraud prevention training with auditors	AEC	Jun 26	Complete
26.1.06	Board Secretary to circulate UHI Transformation statement for Board approval	AB	Mar 26	Complete
26.1.06	Board Secretary to poll members for date for a strategic planning day	AB	Mar 26	Complete
26.1.12	Draft protocol for SMT and Board Member communication	JW	Apr 26	Ongoing
26.1.31 i)	Board Secretary to update calendar invites	AB	Mar 26	Complete