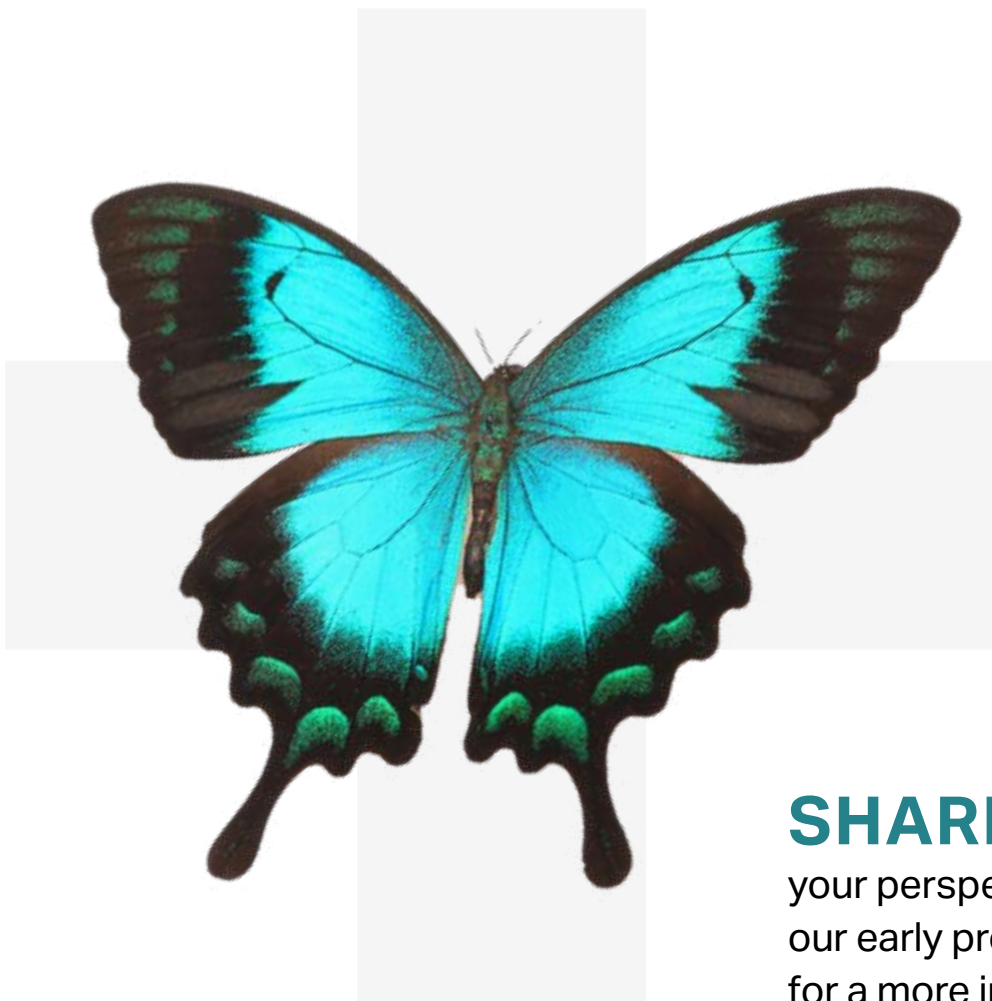


# UHI Transformation

your chance to shape the future of the UHI partnership



## SHARE

your perspective on  
our early proposals  
for a more integrated  
partnership

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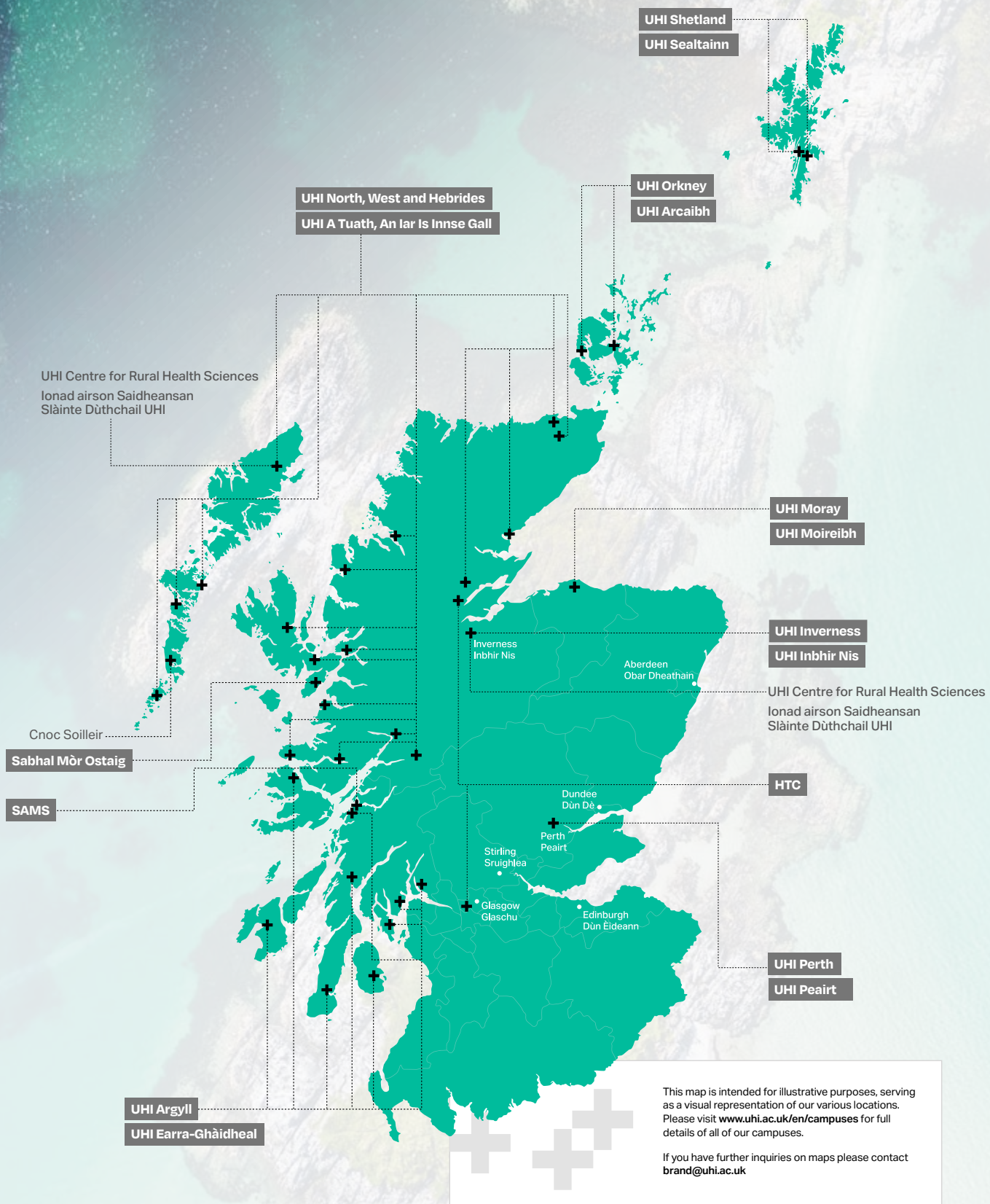
Find out more at [transformation.uhi.ac.uk](https://transformation.uhi.ac.uk)

Complete the survey

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Open from 24 March – 2 May 2025

# UHI



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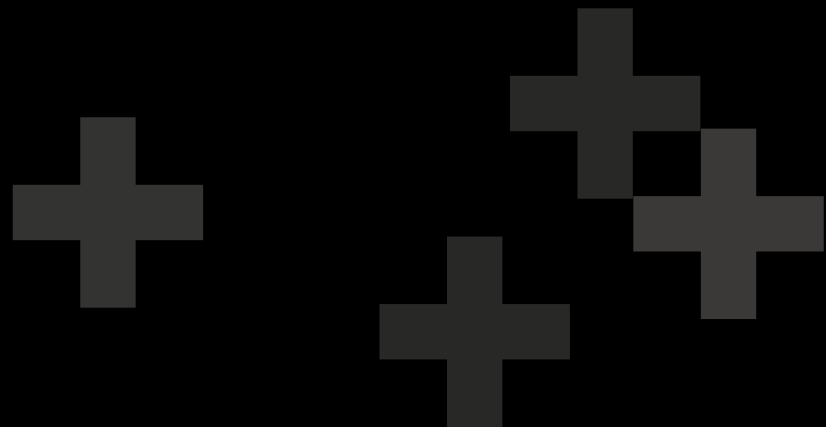
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# Introdu

## Thank you for your interest in the Unive

UHI is Scotland's youngest university and a globally recognised tertiary institution. We are proud to celebrate our exceptional partnership of colleges, internationally recognised research institutions and specialist teaching centres. UHI is more than a traditional university and we pride ourselves on delivering further education, higher education and world class research across a network of colleges and specialist partners. Our mission is simple – to have a transformational impact on the people, communities and economy of our regions.

Our university partnership is now embarking on an exciting journey towards delivering our UHI 2030 Strategic plan. As part of our strategic intent, we are seeking to build on the success of UHI to date. This summary document presents the initial proposals for creating a more integrated and unified institution, further strengthening our dedication to deliver community based world-class learning, skills, research and innovation while being true to our commitment as a partnership to 'think, plan and act as one'.

This early engagement initiative aims to gather valuable insights from students, staff, and other key stakeholders as our partnership evolves and adapts to an ever-changing world. We know that our communities need us to be the best we can be to help them be strong and resilient, thrive and prosper.



# unction

## University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)



As we transform, our top priority is to ensure that all institutional changes remain true to our founding mission and align with the Strategic Plan 2030. This commitment empowers us to continue serving our regions effectively and with integrity, while addressing critical societal challenges such as mitigating depopulation, creating high-quality jobs, strengthening communities, and positioning UHI as a central driver of the unprecedented economic development opportunities across our regions.

To continue fulfilling our mission and vision, we recognise the need to evolve. By embracing organisational integration and streamlining our operations, we can unlock our full potential. Leveraging our collective scale, diversity, and distinctive strengths, we aim to build a stronger and more sustainable organisation that will continue to deliver our mission statement and create success and opportunity.

Like many institutions in the education sector, UHI is facing significant financial challenges and pressures. The highly competitive student recruitment market has been further strained by a substantial decline in international students coming to the UK, alongside sector-wide funding reductions affecting both further and higher education. In response to these evolving circumstances, UHI must

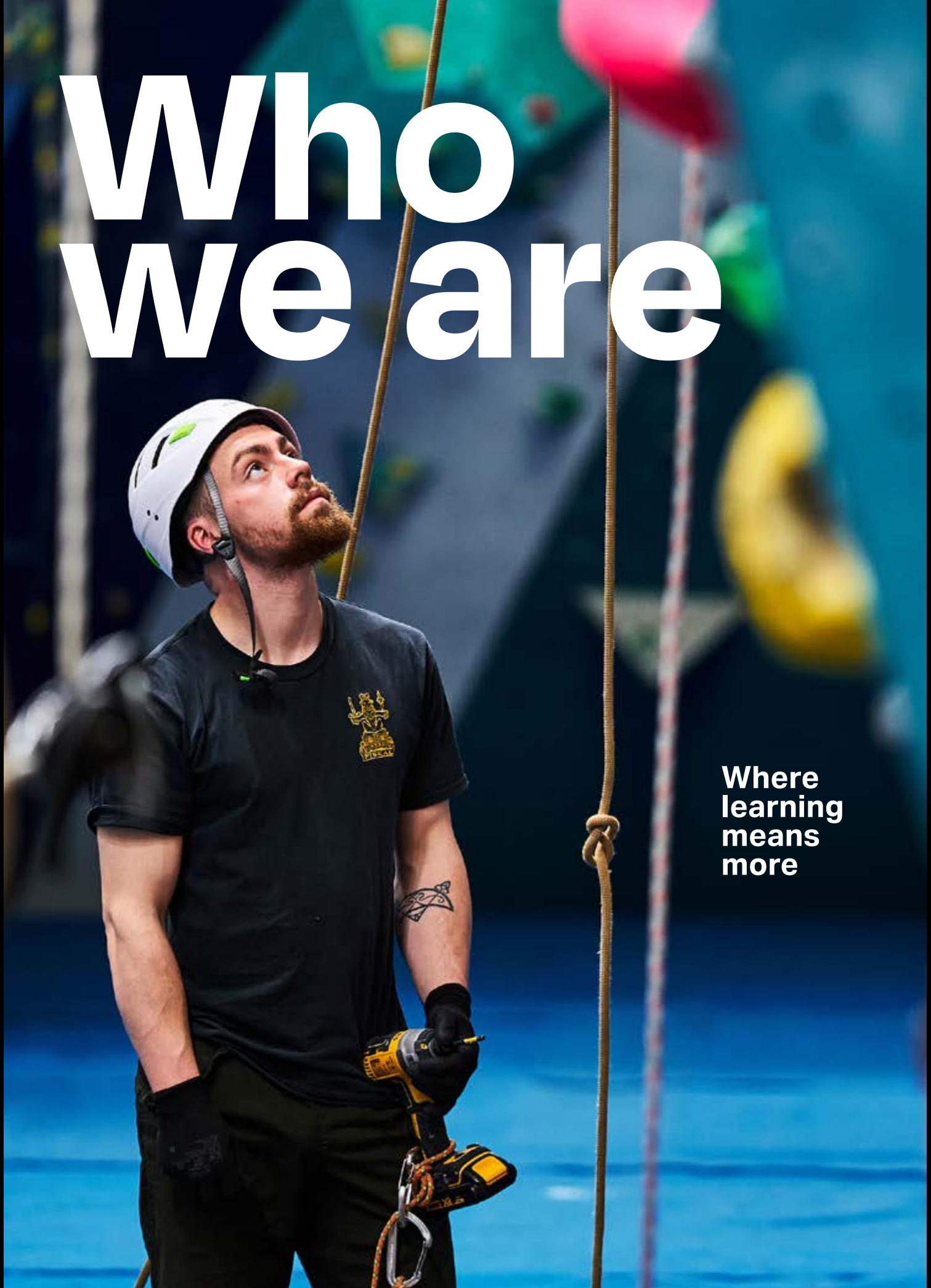
adapt strategically to ensure long-term sustainability while building a platform for growth across all UHI regions.

As our partnership moves forward, we are committed to building on our successes, harnessing our agility and responsiveness to continue delivering an outstanding student experience. We aim to engage with our communities, drive economic development and attract inward investment that benefits the regions we serve. Our ambition will enable us to meet and exceed the evolving needs and expectations of our students and communities, building resilience and addressing the financial challenges for the partnership.

This document outlines the case for change for a more integrated and effective UHI partnership. It serves as the foundation towards the development of a Full Business Case, scheduled for submission to UHI governing bodies in summer 2025 followed by further public consultation.

**We warmly invite your feedback on these proposals, your input will be a key element in shaping UHI's future direction and informing the Full Business Case. Together, we can help ensure that UHI continues to thrive and make a meaningful impact for years to come.**

# Who we are



Where  
learning  
means  
more



---

# Tertiary

Inclusive, supportive,  
progressive and connected

UHI is more than a traditional university. We support young people at every stage of their educational journey - from entry-level access to PhD studies and world-class research, as well as all levels in between. We offer the following programmes:



**+ Apprenticeships**

**+ Entry level classes for secondary pupils**

**+ Further Education**

**+ Higher Education**

**+ Knowledge Exchange**

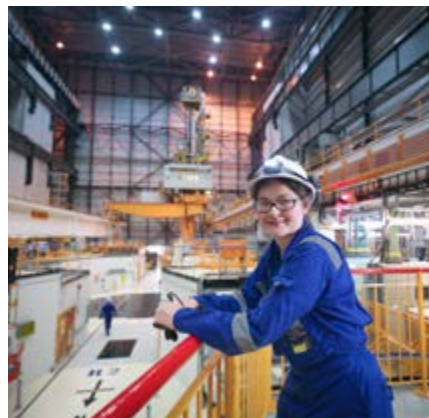
**+ PhD studies**

**+ Short courses and professional certificates**

**+ Work based learning**

**+ World-class research**

**+ Lifelong learning for those with additional support needs**





# **UHI mission, vision and Strategic Plan 2030**

**Where learning means more**



## Founding principles

Established in the 1990s to support the sustainability and growth of the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire regions, UHI was founded on four principles that are still as significant today as they were at our inception:

- + **Educational opportunities for all:**  
within the regions, based in communities.
- + **Driving economic growth:**  
Anchor institution and catalyst of economic development.
- + **Co-creating education and research:**  
Curriculum and research linked to the regions' unique landscape, heritage and culture.
- + **Delivering social change:**  
to build better futures for the regions.

## Strategic Plan 2030

To continue fulfilling our mission and founding principles in an evolving world, we must embrace a more integrated approach. Developed collaboratively by all partners, the Strategic Plan 2030 sets out a route map to translate our future ambitions into results.

United in this purpose and to maximise our potential, the partnership is committed to advancing the five priorities across a local, regional, national and global reach:

- + **Teaching, learning and support**
- + **Research and innovation impact**
- + **Enterprise and growth**
- + **Environmental sustainability**
- + **Operational excellence**

## UHI Mission

To have a transformational impact on the people, communities and economy of our regions. We will do this through the delivery of our 2030 Strategic Plan.

## UHI Vision

We will attract, nurture and retain talent in our communities, 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.



What do you see as the main priorities for a more integrated UHI in its first three years?



Do you feel that UHI is currently delivering on its mission and vision, incorporating our four founding principles?

Are there ways we can improve?



# A more integrated university partners

## What is integration?

Our aim through the transformation programme is to drive a change process which will deliver significant and increased benefit for UHI's students, staff and communities through closer integration. This involves streamlining current provisions, structures, systems, governance, and processes to enhance the student experience, ensuring financial sustainability and a platform for growth and investment across our regions.

The UHI tertiary partnership comprises a diverse network of colleges, research institutions, specialist partners and the university. Each partner operates under unique governance arrangements, with the university fulfilling its statutory role as the Regional Strategic Body (RSB). As the RSB, we collaborate with partners on key areas such as funding allocation, regional outcomes, academic standards, research and degree-awarding powers and financial sustainability.

All UHI partners are actively engaged in the ongoing transformation process. The university, as the Regional Strategic Body, and the following six partners are collectively exploring closer integration:

- + **UHI Argyll**
- + **UHI Inverness**
- + **UHI Moray**
- + **UHI North, West and Hebrides**
- + **UHI Perth**
- + **UHI Shetland**

UHI Orkney and the three specialist partners will maintain their own governance structures while staying actively involved in discussions as equal contributors to shaping UHI's future. These partners will have opportunity to join the change progress at regular intervals, subject to agreement by their governing bodies.

**UHI | ARGYLL**

**UHI | INVERNESS**

**UHI | MORAY  
MOIREIBH**

**UHI | NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES  
A TUATH, AN IAR IS INNSE GALL**

**UHI | ORKNEY**

**UHI | PERTH**

**UHI | SHETLAND**

**UHI | SHETLAND  
A member of UHI**

**SAMS** | A member of UHI  
Scottish Association  
for Marine Science

**SABHAL  
MOR  
OSTAIG**  
The Highlands and Islands  
University

**UHI** University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
**Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean**

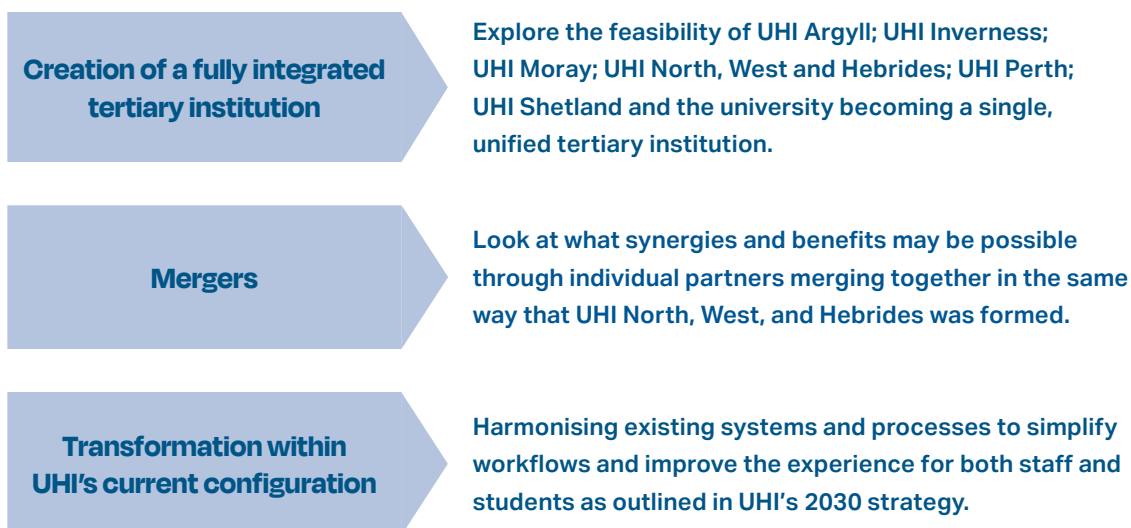


# ship

To begin the transformation process, an Outline Business Case was developed throughout 2024 in close collaboration across the partnership.

Currently, all partners are working collectively to develop a new operating model and establish a clear route map for its implementation. This model will strengthen our organisation, enhance efficiency, and maximise benefits for our students, staff, and communities.

To achieve this, we must explore multiple pathways:

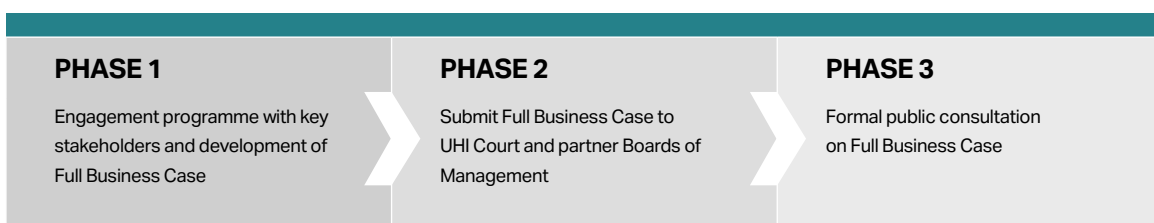


The next stage is to develop a Full Business Case that will set out the changes we are seeking to make. There will be considerable engagement with staff, students, trade unions and our other stakeholders to ensure that the operating model we propose is robust as possible and accounts for the differing needs of the communities we serve.

Once the Full Business Case is approved by UHI Court and boards of management later in 2025, a formal consultation will take place providing additional significant opportunity for stakeholders to engage and provide feedback.

## Process

Engagement and discussions with the Scottish Government through the Scottish Funding Council will remain ongoing throughout each phase of the Full Business Case.



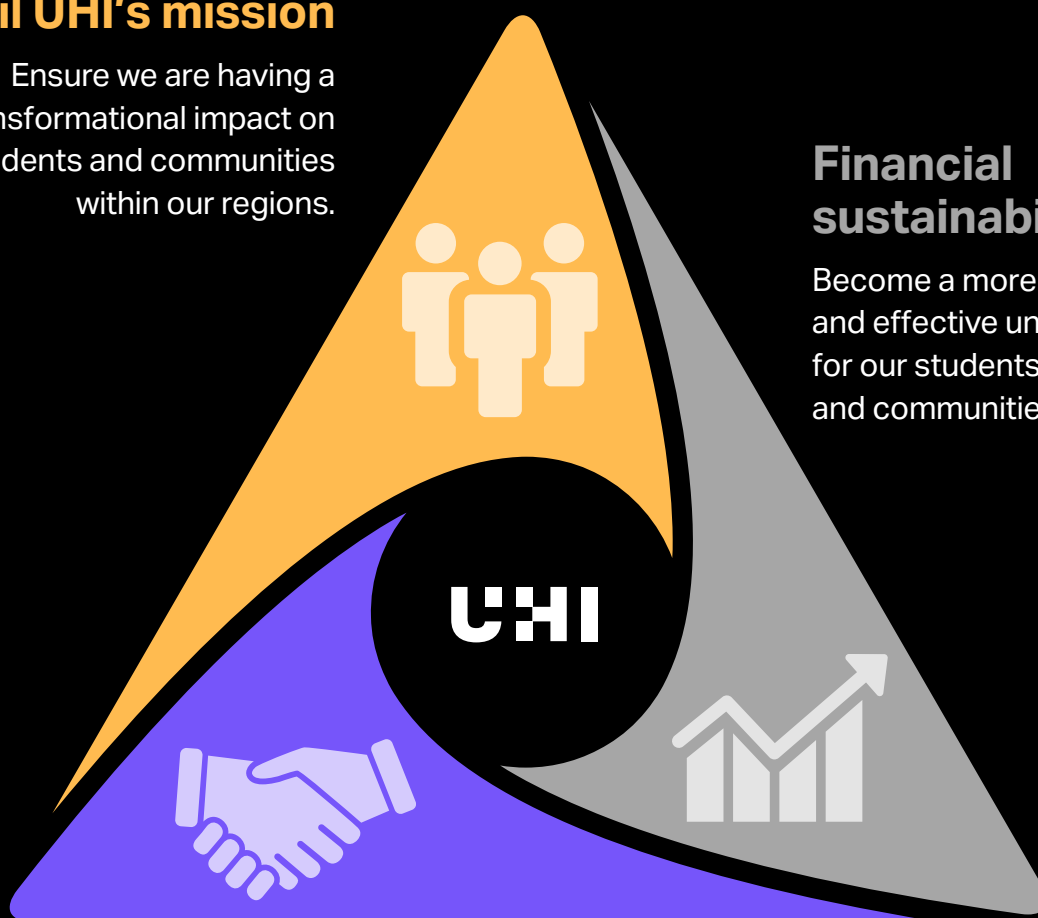
# The need for transformation

## Fulfil UHI's mission

Ensure we are having a transformational impact on students and communities within our regions.

## Financial sustainability

Become a more efficient and effective university for our students, staff and communities.



## Create platform for growth and success

Adapt to a changing world by providing curriculum and research aligned with evolving economic opportunities and regional strengths.



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# Realising our ambition

We are seeking to operate more effectively and efficiently while continuing to improve our delivery of learning, teaching, research and knowledge exchange, ensuring the institution's long-term sustainability. We are fully committed to staying deeply connected and remaining a fundamental part of all communities we serve.

By becoming a more integrated institution, we seek to:

- + Become a financially sustainable tertiary education institution.
- + Create access to a stronger, sustainable, and enhanced Learning, Teaching and Research offer for all UHI students and communities.
- + Provide an enhanced 'one UHI' student experience across all locations and online, with equity in provision, opportunity, policy, and support for students.
- + Provide better opportunities for staff including progression and career development.
- + Enhance capacity for engagement and partnerships with businesses and employers within our communities.
- + Streamline governance and move to a more unified leadership and governance structure.
- + Enhance growth in regionally significant and emerging sectors, driving economic development and strengthening contributions to the local economy.

## Financial sustainability

Like many Scottish universities and colleges, UHI is facing financial challenges in today's economic climate. Over the past decade, funding for the sector has been cut significantly in real terms, while inflation and policy changes add extra pressure.

### Unique cost challenges

- + **UHI's rural and island setup**  
UHI's unique setup across many rural and island communities increases the cost of delivering education compared to urban areas.
- + **More competitive market**  
Higher competition for student recruitment combined with tough funding conditions requires UHI to adapt its operations.
- + **Continuing with the current model**  
The current UHI model is not sustainable and will result in ongoing financial challenges for UHI, strengthening our resolve to reform and evolve in an ever-changing climate.

### Solutions

- + **Reduce costs**  
Address financial challenges by reducing costs for all partners, such as reducing duplication of services allowing UHI to become more efficient and effective.
- + **New income**  
We will enable growth and essential investment, enhancing the student experience in the long-term as a destination of choice for new learners.
- + **Work collaboratively**  
Our partnership will work collaboratively to co-design changes which will strengthen UHI's role as a leading provider of worldclass education and research, and ensure long-term financial sustainability.



# Economic opportunities

The UHI regions are some of the fastest growing areas of Scotland. The Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP) demonstrate the sheer magnitude of economic benefit. Early research shows that over the next 10 to 15 years, over £110 billion inward investment could be made across the Highland and Island regions with an estimated 85,000 job years over that time, positioning UHI to maximise opportunities across some of Scotland's most important sectors. The scale of the skilled workforce required by industry will drive an in-regions demand for further education and apprenticeships, as well as undergraduate and Master's level qualifications, placing UHI at the heart of these educational, commercial and economic opportunities.

## Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport (ICFGF)

- + The ICFGF sites are the UK's largest green industrial development, drawing global investment to establish the region as Europe's leading hub for offshore wind and renewable energy technologies. UHI, as a key partner, will support this development by training the future workforce to ensure the Green Freeport delivers a transformative impact.

## ScotWind

- + Scotland's offshore wind pipeline ranks among the world's largest development of this type. Over 70% of the projects will feature cutting-edge floating technology, positioning Scotland and the UK as leaders in Floating Offshore Wind. Since 2021, UHI has partnered with ScotWind developers to drive science, technology, STEM projects, scholarships, and research across its network.

## Hydrogen

- + The Highlands are poised to lead the UK's green hydrogen revolution, driven by massive offshore wind potential. Cromarty Firth provides an ideal location, with access to renewable electricity, strong local demand, expert supply chains, UHI's hydrogen research, and the Highland Council's push for a hydrogen economy.

## Pumped hydro

- + Pumped hydro stores surplus low-carbon power for use when wind and solar are unavailable, ensuring energy flexibility. The Coire Glas project, led by one of UHI's strategic partners SSE, is the UK's largest and most advanced planned storage projects over 10GW. Industry partners like Statkraft and Statera are also collaborating with UHI on workforce and skills strategies.





## Additional economic opportunities

- + Aquaculture
- + Creative industries
- + Tourism
- + Ports and harbours
- + Energy transmission
- + Space ports



Do you think UHI's current curriculum aligns with your local workforce needs and provides education and training suited to current and future regional job opportunities?



Do you believe UHI is well-positioned in ensuring the economic and social benefits across our regions are met, such as meeting the requirements of the renewable energy transition?

## What is UHI's role?

There will be a significant demand for:

- + Education
- + Training and skills
- + Research
- + Innovation
- + Community empowerment

# UHI's principles to enable transformation







To ensure that a more integrated partnership aligns with UHI's collective ambition, seven principles to enable change have been agreed by all partners. Any decision about the future of UHI will be underpinned by these principles:

### 1. Learning, teaching and research

Enhance our ability to deliver learning, teaching and research.

### 2. Student experience

Increase the proportion of the resources that are spent on our students to enhance their experience of studying with UHI, at whatever level, and the equity across that provision.

### 3. Geographically dispersed

Remain geographically dispersed, delivering the educational needs of our communities and enhance local economic growth and development.

### 4. Locally led approach

Ensure local accountability and empowerment and place-based approaches that underpin UHI with coherence and responsiveness across our regions.

### 5. Staff opportunities

Provide for greater opportunities for our staff and their career development across corporate and tertiary academic provision.

### 6. Decision making

Enhance our decision making through single point accountability.

### 7. Tertiary focus

Become fully tertiary in everything that we do and use this to lead the post-16 education agenda in Scotland.



Do these seven principles comprehensively encompass what is essential for successful transformation of the UHI partnership?





# Proposed benefits





As a result of our continued evolution, we envision a range of impactful benefits that will empower our students, enhance opportunities for staff, enrich the communities we serve and stimulate and attract economic development to the region. The Full Business Case will outline the specific strategies and actions that will be implemented to achieve these benefits.

## Students

- + **More coherent and sustainable curriculum**  
A unified curriculum offer with distinct and clear progression routes for our students.
- + **Higher investment in core academic delivery**  
A larger share of funding will directly enhance academic delivery, student experience, and research excellence.
- + **Improved systems and services**  
Establishing seamless, cohesive and high-quality student support services for both in person and online learning, underpinned by single policies and systems to ensure consistency and enhanced student experience.
- + **Increased student support**  
Greater capacity and resources allocated to student support services, infrastructure development and Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) engagement.
- + **Streamlined student journey**  
Efficient and consistent processes guiding students smoothly from enquiry to application to graduation.
- + **Enriched social dimension**  
Enrich the social dimension of college and university life, whether this be through face-to-face or online delivery.
- + **Expanded access to learning**  
Higher investment in academic delivery increases the access to learning at different locations, including in-person and online.
- + **Improved support for Gaelic**  
Increased ability to integrate Gaelic and the Gaelic language plan across all regions.

## Staff

- + **Consistent employee experience**  
Ensure fairness and equity in policies, opportunities, terms, conditions, and organisational structures to support all staff fairly.
- + **Opportunities for growth and professional development**  
Expand career progression pathways, professional development and specialised roles supporting long-term career aspirations across diverse services and functions.
- + **Boosting efficiency and resilience**  
Consolidate resources to increase operational efficiency, reducing workloads and duplication while strengthening resilience.
- + **Cultivating a more positive culture**  
Foster a collaborative and supportive environment that promotes a positive organisational culture and a strong sense of belonging.
- + **Improved job satisfaction and recognition**  
Enhance job satisfaction by providing greater recognition, reward, and overall fulfilment in the workplace.



Measure and promote the tangible impact that UHI has on economic development across the regions.



## Communities

- + **Enhanced employability skills**  
Offer enhanced employability skills and education that matches the evolving needs of the current and future workforce, ensuring we meet local demand and need.
- + **Reinvest in local opportunities**  
Create capacity to reinvest in growth opportunities across learning and teaching, skills development, knowledge exchange and commercial activities.
- + **Relevant curriculum for the regions**  
Continue to develop dynamic, responsive curriculum tailored to the evolving needs of regional communities and key stakeholders.
- + **Improved visibility of local priorities**  
Enhance visibility of local, cultural and linguistic identity in the Highlands and Islands through UHI's raised profile, including the Gaelic Language Plan.
- + **Increase UHI's economic impact on communities**  
Measure and promote the tangible impact that UHI has on economic development across the regions.
- + **Responsive to local needs**  
Locally responsive and knowledgeable staff providing a local presence across the regions, with specific processes for community engagement.





Q

Are there additional benefits that UHI should consider, in addition to the proposed benefits for students, staff and communities?



## Commitments

As part of this transformation programme, UHI boards of management and senior leaders have made the following commitments:

- + Minimise disruption to students, staff and communities throughout the transformation programme.
- + Engage proactively with trade unions.
- + Savings will be reinvested to enhance our services for students, staff and communities.
- + Retain local decision making and delivery.

# Transformation governance and leadership





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Representation from across the partnership form the leadership and governance bodies responsible for overseeing the transformation programme. These membership boards provide a clear framework with defined objectives, roles and responsibilities.

## **UHI Court**

The Regional Strategic Bodies' board of governors, is responsible for the overall strategic direction and governance of the university, managing the functions of our tertiary institution in compliance with the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. Court will oversee the transformation programme from inception through to implementation.

## **Transition Oversight Board**

The Transition Oversight Board includes UHI governors, independent representation, student and staff representatives, bringing diverse expertise from across the partnership. This group is responsible for steering and monitoring the development of the new operating model, making sure it aligns with UHI's Strategic plan 2030. Reporting to UHI Court, the board provides governance, tracks progress, manages risks, and ensures resources are used wisely while delivering both financial and non-financial benefits.

## **Transition Executive Board**

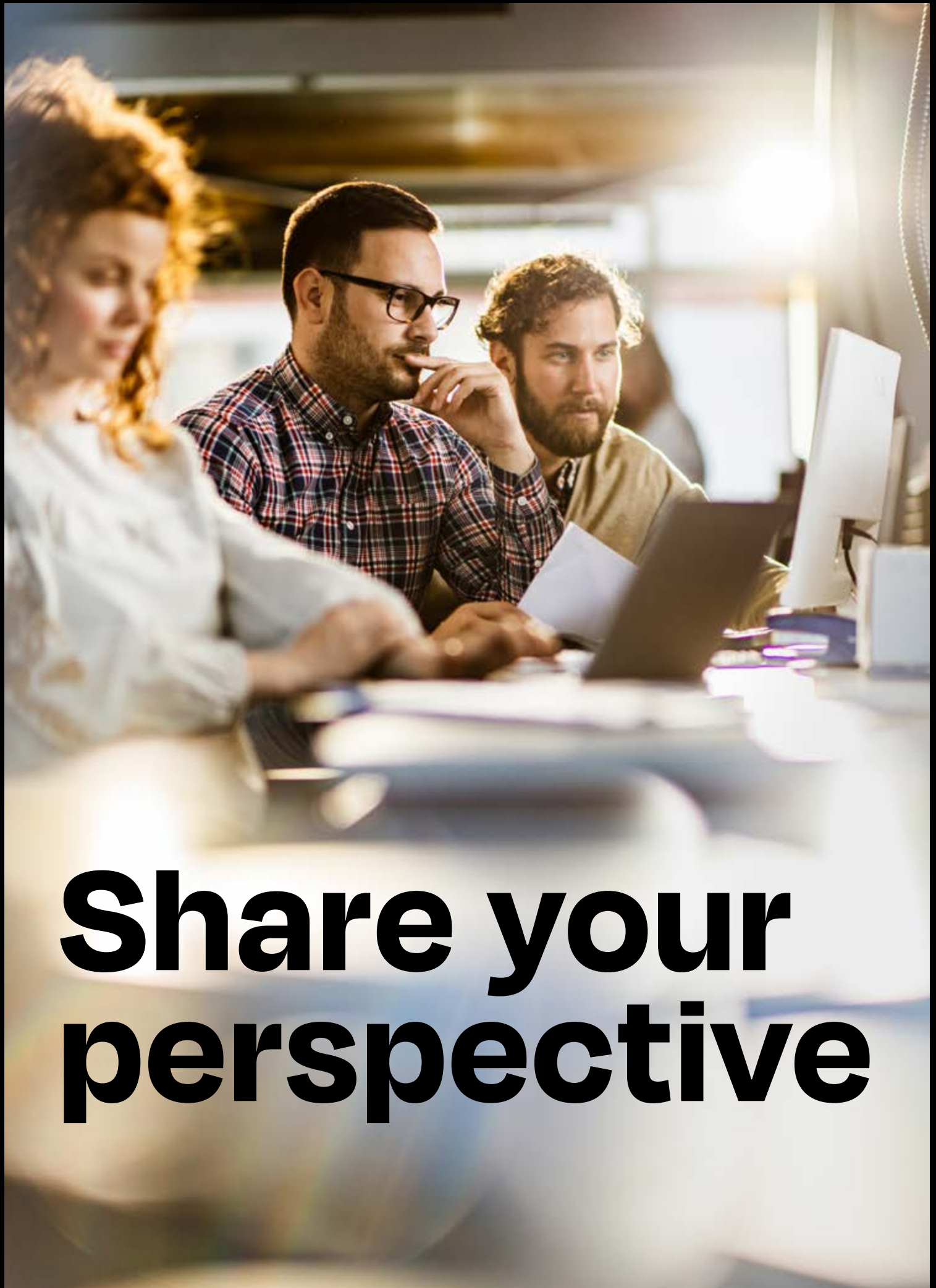
The Transition Executive Board plays a key role in shaping UHI's transformation programme by overseeing the development of the practical work through effective partnership engagement. The board membership includes the 11 principals from each institution ensuring all partner's perspectives are considered. Reporting to the Transition Oversight Board, it is responsible for reviewing progress, approving workstreams and tracking financial and operational benefits.



To find out more about the Transformation governance and leadership, as well as the priority workstreams that have been created to support the development of the Full Business Case, visit [transformation.uhi.ac.uk](https://transformation.uhi.ac.uk)







**Share your  
perspective**

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We are inviting input at this early stage of our development to help shape the Full Business Case of a more integrated university partnership in a way that maximises value, sustainability, and opportunities, ensuring the greatest possible benefit for students, staff and communities. We welcome feedback from anyone invested in the future of UHI, with particular interest in hearing from:

- + Our current students and their parents/guardians
- + Our staff
- + Trade unions
- + Community and third sector organisations within the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire regions
- + Partner organisations within the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire regions
- + Local authorities within the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire regions
- + Elected members of Scottish and UK Parliaments
- + National skills and qualification authorities, and college and university sector bodies in Scotland, and the Scottish Funding Council
- + Health boards within the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire regions

## How to respond

Your feedback is crucial in helping to shape a future model for UHI. The questionnaire runs from 24 March to 2 May 2025.

### Complete the survey

#### + **Online**

Please visit <https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/uhi/uhi-transformation> to respond to the questions that accompany this document.



#### + **Hard copy**

Hard copies of the survey can be collected at your nearest learning centre by request.

Please email [transformation@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:transformation@uhi.ac.uk) if you would like to collect a hard copy including the name of the learning centre you will be collecting from.

Survey responses can be scanned in and emailed to [transformation@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:transformation@uhi.ac.uk), or returned to the same learning centre you collected it from.

A summary document from the feedback of these early proposals will be published on [transformation.uhi.ac.uk](https://transformation.uhi.ac.uk) once the data is collated. These responses will inform the development of the Full Business Case.

### Find out more

Visit [transformation.uhi.ac.uk](https://transformation.uhi.ac.uk) for more details on the early proposals.

### Privacy and Data Protection

No personal details will be gathered as part of this engagement programme. All responses will remain anonymous. Visit [transformation.uhi.ac.uk](https://transformation.uhi.ac.uk) to view the full privacy statement.



# UHI

## 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



Where learning  
means **more**

UHI House, Old Perth Road, Inverness, Scotland IV2 3JH

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