Meeting Minutes

Meeting	Trustee Board	
	Management Board	
	Executive Committee	X
	Finance & Commercial Development	
	Appointments & Renumeration	
	Compliance, Governance & Risk	
	Other: Extraordinary Committee Meeting	

Meeting Date	6th November 2023
Meeting Time	14:30-15:30
Attendance	
Present	William Campbell (WC) (President), , Ahren Armstrong (AA) (Argyll Depute), Elizabeth Keegan (EK) (Inverness President), Rebecca Bond (RB) (Perth Depute President (Activities and Welfare)), Fiona Smith (FS) (Perth President, Holly Pearce Kayes (HPK) (Inverness Depute President Education), Antony Blackshaw (Interim CEO), Joseph Sweeny (JS) (Inverness Depute President (Activities and Welfare), Kian MacDonald (SAMS Depute President)
Apologies	Sophie-Ann Bain (North Highland Depute President), Shannon MacCallum (West Highland Depute President), Melissa Carr (Moray Depute President (Education).
Non-Attendance	

Section	Minutes
1	**Welcome and Meeting Management**
1.1 Apologies	WC welcomed attendees to the November Executive Committee Meeting. Apologies were received from: Melissa Carr Sophie-Ann Bain Shannon MaCcallum
1.2 Minutes from 2nd October 2023	The minutes were approved as circulated.
1.3 Action Log from 2nd October 2023	WC said that there is nothing on the action log so there is nothing to approve.
2	**UHI Strike Action**
2.1 Update from the Union	WC explained that the Universities and Colleges Union was currently in a dispute with UHI regarding the Executive Office restructure, and had been on strike action and participating in action short of strike, but had now agreed to pause that action following UHI's decision to come to the table, although their mandate was valid for another six months. It was noted that UHI had the right to withhold pay if UCU were to strike due to the nature of the services and contracts involved, but had agreed to give two weeks' notice were they intending to do so. EIS-FELA's mandate was identified as having run out, with academic boards now able to get together and grades starting to be ratified across the partnership. WC added that he'd had productive conversations

	with EIS-FELA members at regional and national levels, as well as being asked by key stakeholders and members what was being done to support them, with a supporting statement released and advice service in place. He confirmed that he would be staying engaged with unions, but they had added some Student Association staff and members' personal social media accounts, as well as encouraging picket lines and signs, although this had reduced since the strikes were called off, and he was specifically engaging with the students involved, particularly nursing students. Regarding next steps, WC stated that he was in talks with the Vice Chancellor about the conversations between her team and the unions, with any major updates to be brought to the committee as and when, adding that he and GS had knowledge of the UHI structure and finances as Court members, and it was likely that more Academic Partners would start to reshuffle and change their structures, leading to much more communication with Unions at regional and local levels over the next year at least.
3	**Gender Neutral Bathrooms**
3.1 Potential YSA Policy	KM explained that increasing the inclusivity of SAMS had been part of his manifesto, with the current program in need of updating, and that the NUS event had kickstarted thinking around gender-neutral toilets as part of improving student life and mental health. KM had held casual discussions with some staff and students. A further meeting is booked with staff regarding the action plan and practicality on 20th November which would be followed by a student survey in December and a proposal paper in January or February. AA had only received feedback from one or two staff based at Argyll and hadn't had the chance to pursue feedback from students but was waiting for SVRs to be trained to start having meetings and using them to get feedback at their campuses over the next month or so. Neither SAMS nor Argyll currently have gender-neutral toilets. WC agreed that he liked the idea of having it as a wide-scale policy and ensuring all Academic Partners met EDI with the current Students' Association focus on EDI making it a good opportunity to get the ball rolling across the partnership. ES suggested it as a topic for discussion at the Regional Student Council at the end of November. **ACTIONS:** • All Committee Members to find out how many gender-neutral toilets currently exist at their Academic Partners and campuses and report back to WC. • KM and AA to work with the stakeholders at their Academic Partners over the next weeks and months to discuss the possibility of gender-neutral bathrooms. • Gender-neutral bathrooms to be suggested as a topic for discussion at the next Regional Student Council meeting.
4	**Cross Campus Events**
4.1 More collaboration on events across campuses	WC explained that he and GS had been at Perth's Good Vibes festival, which had been an all-round success and had led to the idea of holding the same events at different campuses at the same time. He wondered what sort of events the Exec would like to see as cross-campus events, and where more collaboration could take place. HPK liked the idea but wondered where the money would come from. WC suggested collaborations would be out of the local budget, but that collaboration could be human

	as well as financial resources, with the idea being for officers to collaborate in the same ways that staff currently do.
	RB agreed it would be nice for Murray and Perth to collaborate in ways that boosted the social media of both. WC noted that North, West Hebrides was a merged college, so their events were inherently cross-campus, but collaboration could be based on region to reach as many students as possible.
	KM added that he had been considering it with AA and Sharon, as Argyll and Fort William were closest to him, but identified that in the best-case scenario, SAMS would have 100 students attending an event, and more typically around 20, making cross-campus events difficult.
	WC summarised that more collaboration was desired, but there were concerns about engagement levels compared to resource use. He suggested possible events should be considered and discussions started outside of the meeting.
5	**Schedules**
5.1 Reflections on approving proposed constitutional amendments	CW explained that the document was still a working document due to the number of conversations needed to progress it, with several schedules not yet complete. She identified the big changes as, in order of priority, (1) Schedule 1, changing 'Principal Officers' to 'Student Leaders of the Association' due to its impact on the upcoming elections, (2) Schedule 3, specifically the adoption of the idea of co-option to ensure representation, (3) Schedule 2, democratic governance, and (4) Schedule 7, freedom of speech. **Schedule 1** CW noted that changing 'Regional Officers' to 'Cross-campus Officers' was pretty much given, but approval was needed, and that the main change was the removal of the third Cross-campus Officer. She explained that the difficulty of recruiting a new full-time role after the start of the year had been discussed in the Exec meeting in July following the third officer's resignation and that it had been felt the system was currently working with both WC and GS in post without there necessarily being a need for a third Cross-campus Officer. It was also stated that the current version referenced Local Officers, Student Groups as leadership, Delegates of the Association, and Student Leaders. CW explained that there were no changes to Perth, which would continue to have a Depute President to align with all the other roles, but that RB and Hannah's roles would be removed as Elected Officer roles and replaced with Student Intern roles, being appointed rather than elected. In Inverness, to reach the hours for a full-time Depute President, the two Depute roles, the Activities role and the Education role would be lost, with the extra hours going towards the activities covered by the lost roles. In North, West and Hebrides the three roles would become two, one for the mainland and one for the islands, of 17.5 hours each. In Murray the hours would go from 14 to 28, not full-time as stated, to make the books balance. In Shetland, there would be an increase of four hours by combining the Scalloway post with the current Deputy Post. The rationale for all changes was to increase the number of officers available for longer periods, making meeting organisation and communication simpler, although it was acknowledged that there were still officers whose hours had not changed whose timetables would need to be considered, and that fewer elected roles would hopefully simplify the process to fill posts. Local Officer roles were noted to have the same issue with resignations as Cross-campus Officers, potentially interrupting the studies of eligible students. It was also suggested that the term of office for a Local

Officer would be ten months if not returning, and extended to twelve months if re-elected for the following year to avoid interruption.

RB wondered what the priorities of Local Officers would be in the additional two months that would not be covered in the event of a newly elected officer taking up the post. CW admitted that it was financially driven, and her preference would be for twelve-month contracts regardless, as the gap led to difficulties in handover, and there was already a complication in the June Board of Management meeting, although remuneration was not associated with attendance. She suggested that it be considered as bringing the July start forward to engage in training and that she thought something was lost by not providing preparation time, exacerbating issues regarding forward planning.

HPK expressed concern that reducing multiple part-time roles down to a single full-time role could result in burnout for that officer. CW suggested that if an officer wanted to reduce their hours, that money would go to other people to help, noting that there was as much risk of multiple roles experiencing burnout as a single role. HPK noted that the reduction in roles would also leave the individual alone in the office, and wondered if there would be anyone such as the Local Coordinator still there. CW admitted that she didn't know how it would work, but expected there would still be the Development Manager and Local Coordinator, and that there had been talk of creating executive committees made up of super reps, as well as the potential for better engagement leading to volunteers. ES also highlighted issues where officers had been elected and their supporting roles had not, suggesting that it was a good opportunity to address what positions and support was needed.

RB asked if the Student Intern roles were allowed to sit on Boards. CW stated that her interpretation was that they could, as it was a requirement to be nominated by the Student Association, but it was the Board's discretion to refuse that nomination.

WC wondered what would happen in situations where local officers were cross-campus, such as North, West and Hebrides, and whether there might be confusion with the term 'Cross-campus Officer'. CW agreed it was possible, admitting she didn't like the term personally, and was open to alternative terminology if there was a consensus.

HPK asked whether full-time officers for each campus wouldn't take away from Regional Presidents. CW explained that it could give them more capacity to go to places where hours weren't made up, so didn't think it was an issue.

CW highlighted that the Executive Committee, according to the articles, had said only one person from each Academic Partner had voting rights, stressing that it wasn't her decision, rather what should and hadn't been happening, so there was a move back towards being constitutional. However, it had been acknowledged that North, West and Hebrides was so diverse that a single person with voting rights might result in the mainland dominating the islands. Unfortunately the deadline for amending the articles had passed, so CW suggested the options were, (1) the changes be agreed with no action taken regarding voting rights and everyone attending Executive Committee continuing to vote, although this was now known to be unconstitutional, unless agreeing with the Board it was a change to be made at the soonest opportunity, (2) changing to proportional representation, which would give larger Academic Partners a greater voice and could be perceived as unfair, or (3) creating sub-committees within

Academic Partners to review and discuss Exec papers, and reach a collective decision, prior to the Executive Meeting. She wondered if the committee wanted to make an immediate decision, or to take the matter for consideration.

WC suggested a vote on principle, with a deadline for any further thoughts or questions of next Wednesday.

ACTIONS:

- Executive members to send WC any thoughts or questions on the Schedule 1 changes by 15th November.

Schedule 3

CW explained that she needed to discuss current job descriptions with ES, and that the proposed changes were to effectively streamline the election process by moving operational processes into separate documents that could be approved by the returning officer, such as moving the job descriptions into the candidates' guide, and to reference the potential for co-option to fill vacancies arising throughout the year, which was currently being done on an unconstitutional basis. The importance of 'postal' or 'proxy voting', and how it was managed as a process, was identified as a topic for separate consideration, along with the need for an official 'Tie Procedure'.

The Executive Committee approved the document.

Schedule 2

CW explained that the document set out authority levels and that if the Board of Trustees were to override a Student decision, it would seek an alternative first. The process for the Board to appoint an Independent Returning Officer, as well as the referendum processes and triggers were also noted, although it was acknowledged that numbers for this and other areas were still under consideration given the variation in student numbers at different campuses.

The Executive Committee approved the document in principle, subject to decisions regarding numbers.

Schedule 7

CW explained that it was a new document supporting freedom of speech within the law.

DECISIONS:

The Executive Committee approved the document in principle.

CW concluded that other documents had yet to be written and thanked the committee members for their time, adding that she would keep the timeline as transparent as possible and get those documents completed and circulated as soon as possible, with a deadline enabling consideration before the All Student meeting. WC confirmed that he would coordinate with CW, committee members, and Hannah to arrange an extraordinary committee meeting for approval if necessary.

6	**Any Other Business**

6.1 Network Students	HPK explained that network students were struggling with their courses due to a lack of interaction, with cameras being off etc. She suggested an online study session for different degree or HND groups to meet and asked what people thought of the idea. WC clarified that HPK had a course that was entirely text-based, and he had met other students in similar circumstances, adding that Emma had set up a network student group. HPK stated that in particular, it might make paying students who were now only online feel more secure and enthusiastic about being part of UHI. It was confirmed that this would be UHI-wide. RB and KM agreed that it sounded like a great idea, with KM wondering if it would be helpful for him to get in contact with some of the online students there for their opinions on the idea. WC suggested considering how Emma and the network student group could be involved. HPK asked if everyone could find out how many network students were at their campus and let her know. **ACTIONS:** • KM to contact HPK regarding online students at SAMS and their feedback on her proposed online study sessions. • Committee members to see if they can find out how many network students are at their campus and let HPK know. • WC to contact Mark regarding data on the number of students studying online. There being no other business, the meeting ended.