

UHI Foundation

Wed 12 May 2021, 13:00 - 15:00

By VC Webex Teams

Attendees

Board members

Anton Edwards (Rector - Chair of Foundation), Todd Walker (Principal & Vice Chancellor), Roger Sendall (Acting University Secretary), Garry Coutts (Chair of Court), Florence Jansen (HISA President), Tom Inglis (Vice Chair of Foundation), Liz Ashworth, Duncan Martin, Thomas Prag, Fiona McLean, Andrew Rae, Dr Cllr Stephen Clackson, Derek Bedford, Roy Templeton, Evelyn Johnston, Lewis Vernal, Michael Macmillan, Allan Bransbury, Finlay Mackenzie, Andrew Scott, Graham Birnie, Christine Shaw (Clerk)

Meeting minutes

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Principal & Vice Chancellor was given a warm welcome to his first business meeting. The Rector opened the meeting and noted that a quorum was present.

Apologies were received from Rev Sarah Murray, John Ferguson, Angus MacLeod, Zosia Fraser, John Buchan, Eric McVicar, Lord MacKay of Clashfern, HISA VPFE, David Gordon, David Gauld, Cllr Claire Feaver, Cllr Amy Taylor, John Keay, Duncan Ferguson, Michael Breslin.

 Foundation Agenda - 12 May 2021.pdf

1.1. - Declarations of Interest

None.

1.2. - Notification of any other competent business

None.

2. MINUTES

 FN20-08 Minutes_UHI Foundation_191120.pdf

2.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020

The minutes of the above meeting were reviewed and approved (FN-08) The clerk was asked to correct a minor spelling error.

2.2. Matters Arising

Foundation considered the paper that set out the actions and matters arising from the previous meetings.

The Rector hoped that Foundation appreciated the sentiments behind Meg Bateman's inaugural poem, "Let the Northern Land Shine" in the manner of its expression - *circulated November 2020*.

2.3. Review of Any Delegated Decisions

None.

3. HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The President of HISA provided the Foundation with a verbal report in support of her circulated paper (FN20-21-01). The following key points were highlighted:

HISA enjoyed a very successful annual student conference in January 2021. Keynote speakers included Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP and Matt Crilly, NUS Scotland President, and HISA were delighted to welcome Professor Todd Walker.

HISA appointed James Lindsay as HISA's new Chief Executive Officer. James started his new post on 15 March 2021.

HISA elections took place in March to elect officers for the 2021/22 academic year. Nineteen posts were up for election, three regional posts and sixteen local officer posts.

All other HISA activities are noted in the report.

 FN20-21-01 HISA Update UHI Foundation May 21.pdf

4. REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Foundation received a report from the Principal and Vice Chancellor that is appended to and forms part of this minute.

The Principal & Vice Chancellor thanked the Chair for a warm welcome to his first Foundation business meeting, and to Flo Jansen (HISA President) for her kind acknowledgement in relation to the HISA conference. He also thanked the Foundation members who provided feedback to him directly on the new Strategic Plan Draft Framework via the website and through email engagement.

The Principal & Vice Chancellor reported that he has written to all MSP's elected in the last election and congratulated them on the election and their appointments. Appointments are in diaries to engage with a number of cabinet ministers in the near future.

The following key points were noted:

Scotland's Rural College - the PVC reported that some progress and synergy is being made on the closer collaboration between UHI and Scotland's Rural College.

Cyber Incident – the University partnership is in a process of recovery from a serious cyber-incident that occurred at the beginning of March. The incident which is subject to an ongoing criminal investigation was quickly contained but did affect a number of systems and services across all sites.

- The University was able to engage externally with the police, National Cyber Security Centre, and Microsoft - all of whom have supported us throughout the incident.
- A huge effort was made by our Learning Information Service staff. They worked tirelessly to ensure that our systems were back online as quickly as possible and to maintain the smooth running of the University.
- Fortunately there has not been any evidence data exfiltration or harm to personal data reported.

Funding cuts across the sector – despite proposals for drastic and potentially damaging funding cuts in universities across England and Wales relating to arts and humanities courses, the Principal and Vice Chancellor reported that at present there has been no indication from the Scottish Government or the Scottish Funding Council that they will follow suit.

REF Submission - Research Report - The Rector referred to a brief report on the research effort which Foundation approved as a commendable achievement.

 FN20-21-02 P&VC Report to Foundation May 2021.pdf

4.1. UHI Quarterly Status Report

Foundation noted the quarterly status reports provided by Executive Office senior managers and academic partner principals. A copy of the presentation slides is appended to and forms part of this minute.

Following suggestions from the Foundation, the University may need to produce a template for the reports in order to provide a more consistent and fuller account of all the academic partner institution activities.

 FN20-21-03 March 2021 AP quarterly report(1).pdf

 FN20-21-03a P&VC Report to Court 17 March 2021.pdf

4.1.1. Principal and Vice Chancellor's report to Court

The Foundation noted a report from the Principal & Vice Chancellor that went to University Court that is appended to and forms part of this minute.

4.2. 2021 Rector Election - Aide Memoire

The Foundation is required to elect a new Rector in accordance with Article 21 of the University's Articles of Association. The current Rector has served two full terms of office and the Foundation is required to elect a new Rector before the end of June.

Foundation noted the paper that set out to provide the previously agreed election process and associated key dates. The nominations for the position of Rector will open on Monday, 14th June 2021. The Rector welcomed contact from anyone wishing to stand for the position of Rector and confirmed that he is happy to share a one-page document of the Rector's viewpoint.

The Acting University Secretary/Director of Corporate Governance took an action to provide a two-page standard role description for the role of Rector.

ACTION: AS/DoCG

 FN20-21-04 Foundation Election .pdf

4.3. University of the Highlands & Islands Audited Financial Statements

Foundation noted the UHI audited financial statements. A copy of the presentation slides is appended to and forms part of this minute.

 FN20-21-05 2019-20 fin statements update.pdf

4.4. Plenary Session:

4.4.1. Questions and Discussions on items 4.1 - 4.4

The Rector hosted a plenary discussion and question and answer session to agenda items 4.1 – 4.4.

4.4.2. A look-back and look-forward discussion on Foundation's role and future potential

The following points were noted:

- Foundation was optimistic for a return to face-to-face meetings in the next academic year. The pandemic has made life difficult for many members in terms of technology and/or with no route to express a commitment for their skills a few members have left.
- We need to build a stronger role for the academic partners into our procedures to encourage more to people join and engage with us.
- Our annual conference is a vital part of the Foundation. It has attracted a lot of interest and support in the past. Going forward it is essential that we involve the academic partners and the wider community.

Liz Ashworth spoke briefly about her interaction with the students at North Highland College—i.e. biscuit making—as part of the University's ten-year birthday celebrations. Working with the students has been an opportunity for her to give something back to education in terms of her skills, experience, and knowledge.

The Foundation reflected on its contribution to the University. It was agreed that members can be seen as ambassadors, champions, or guardians of the vision—one that protects the entity should it go astray.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS - as notified above

Farewell

The Rector thanked everyone and those were unable to attend. He thanked the governance team, and Garry Coutts for his informative influence as the previous rector: a constant guide, a realistic and pragmatic adviser.

Liz Ashworth and Thomas Prag thanked the Rector on behalf of Foundation for his encouragement, enthusiasm, positivity and his thoughtful approach to an important role.

6. DATES OF NEXT MEETING -

6.1. - Rector Hustings Event - 25th June 2021 (TBC)

6.2. - Foundation Business meeting and Vice Chair Election: Thursday 18 November 2021

