

# **Item: 7**

**College Management Council Sub-committee: 7 February 2022.**

**Highlands and Islands Students' Association – Update.**

**Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.**

## **1. Purpose of Report**

To appraise the Sub-committee of the work of the Highlands and Islands Students' Association.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

### **2.1.**

The paper prepared by the Orkney Depute President of the Highlands and Islands Students' Association, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, outlining some key activities during October to December 2021.

## **3. Highlands and Islands Students' Association**

### **3.1.**

Both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council continue to encourage colleges to ensure that students engage as fully as possible in the life and governance of colleges. Effective engagement of students features strongly in the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges published by Colleges Scotland.

### **3.2.**

In order to encourage and enable students to present their ideas to the College Management Council, a written report is presented from the Highlands and Islands Student Association in a style decided by the students.

### **3.3.**

The paper prepared by the Orkney Depute President of the Highlands and Islands students' Association, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is written in a style decided by the students.

## **4. Corporate Governance**

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

## **5. Financial Implications**

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from the recommendations of this noting report.

## **6. Legal Aspects**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this noting report.

## **7. Contact Officers**

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Email: [james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:james.wylie@orkney.gov.uk).

Edward Abbott-Halpin, College Principal, Orkney College, telephone 569250,  
Email: [edward.abbott-halpin@orkney.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:edward.abbott-halpin@orkney.uhi.ac.uk).

## **8. Appendix**

Appendix 1: Paper from Highlands and Islands Students Association.

# Appendix 1

Highlands and Islands Students' Association

21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

HISA Orkney – CMC report

## 1. KEY ISSUES

In the second half of the semester, the key student issues were related to accommodation, mental health support, and FE representation across UHI.

### 1.1. LIVING RENT

HISA Orkney reached out to Living Rent, the National Tenants' Union of Scotland, to gather additional data and information in relation to student housing in Orkney. Living Rent is willing to share with HISA Orkney their records about the student experience on the islands in the new year. This will allow HISA Orkney to accurately frame the student housing experience in Orkney. By providing a local setting to a nationwide issue, Living Rent will constitute a reliable database from which to build long-term improvement.

### 1.2. LOCALISED SUPPORT

HISA Orkney had the chance to support a local student who came forward with a series of challenges to their student experience and wellbeing. Although the student association was not able to directly take on casework, the staff stepped in redirecting the student to the support services and ensuring clear communication with them and the college.

### 1.3. FE REPRESENTATION

Over the last months, HISA Orkney has been directing its efforts towards the improvement of Further Education student representation across the partnership. The matter was brought up to the Chair of Court Alastair MacColl, on the occasion of his visit to Orkney in early November. Here, HISA Orkney advocated the inclusion of FE student vote in the future Chair of Court elections. Subsequently, HISA Orkney followed up this matter internally within the student association, in order to ensure full coverage both across UHI and HISA.

#### **1.4. HISA POLICIES**

HISA Orkney will be directly involved in the development of the HISA regional policies in the upcoming semester. These encompass a variety of themes relevant across the partnership and will benefit the overall student experience.

### **2. KEY ACTIVITIES**

Over the last months, HISA Orkney was mainly involved in planning events and deals aimed at the increase of student engagement.

#### **2.1. LOCAL BUSINESSES OUTREACH**

HISA Orkney decided to boost its outreach to local businesses to further enhance the quality of the student experience offered at Orkney College UHI. Members of staff and councillor John Ross Scott reached out to the Pickaquoy to create opportunities for increased student involvement with the sports facilities, classes, and services offered at the centre. A fruitful meeting was held with James Linklater, the manager of the leisure centre. Here, opportunities for increased student discounts for both full time and part-time students were discussed, and funding opportunities were considered. Action points for both HISA and the Pickaquoy Centre were established and will be completed in January/February 2022. A sub-group with student representatives from Heriot-Watt was set up and is currently being used to share information between the two universities and collaborate to create a more cohesive student community.

#### **2.2. STUDENT VOICE REPS TRAINING**

Student Voice Reps training was carried out by the HISA Orkney staff to welcome the student representatives into their role. Although turnout rates were only partial, the session was highly productive and provided HISA Orkney with further insight into student life in Orkney. Students' ideas in regard to clubs and events were noted down, expectations for the academic year were discussed, and the opportunity for SVRs to attend the upcoming regional student council in January was presented.

### **2.3. AWARENESS EVENTS**

HISA Orkney contacted local organizations to discuss opportunities for their involvement in conducting awareness work at the College. The goal was to investigate the experience of OC students is in relation to racial, religious, and gender discrimination, and subsequently offer events tailored to the needs of the student body, enabling the latter to take part in significant present debates. Due to Covid, all three organizations choose to suspend the initiative but remain available to carry out more work in person in the near future.

### **2.4. LAYM TRAINING**

Consistently with their manifesto, the HISA Orkney officer took part in the Look After Your Mate training, offered by HISA Mental Health Coordinator Joel Hockney. The workshop offered an introduction to student mental health and the student experience, giving participants the tools to understand when a peer may be struggling. Participants learnt about communication techniques, signposting and boundaries, self-care and mental health stigma.