The FERB is a "virtually autonomous" Committee of the UHI Court. Funding for FE flows from the SG to the SFC to the UHI as the Regional Strategic Body (RSB) to the FERB.

The FERB was recently assessed by the SFC and found to be working effectively. The UHI was then approved to be the RSB. The FERB meets every 2-3 months and has done since December 2012.

Membership includes:
- The Chairs of all 12 Colleges in the H&I which deliver FE.
- 2 Independent members - gained by advert and interview.
- Representatives - a CEX from the Local Authorities, a Director of Education from a different LA, senior representatives from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Vice Chair (a College Principal) of the FE Executive Board.

Our annual budget is £40M.

The UHI Colleges who are members of the FERB:
- 5 Incorporated Colleges- Perth, Inverness, Moray, North Highland and Lews Castle Colleges.
- 2 Island Colleges- Orkney and Shetland.
- 4 other college legal Structures- Argyll, West Highland, Highland Theological College, Sabhal Mor Ostaig.

FE is delivered from some 70 Learning Centres across 2/3 of the land mass of Scotland. There have been no mergers.

Our main Regional activities have been:
- Curriculum mapping and now Curriculum Planning across the H&I.
- An Estates 10 year plan for the H&I.
- Increasing the links to Schools and following up the recommendations of the Wood Commission.
- Tackling Inequalities and the link to economic and personal growth (I have case studies of student successes who have progressed from very poor life prospects to a vocational short course, then to FE then to a quality job or a HE course).
- Shared Services.

Strong engagement on the changes of funding by SFC including:
- WSUMS to Credits.
- Rurality funding.
- Rural Deprivation - we have commissioned independent work on this.
- EU funding.
Key concerns:
- The additional costs and bureaucracy of ONS. I have been involved in positive changes including the alignment of AY and FY, continued commercial insurance, raised thresholds in the SPFM.
- Student Support Funding - needs to be formalised to deliver efficiently and fairly.
- National Pay Bargaining and the consequences.

Student numbers in the past 3 years:

2011/12- 32848 (FT 4116, PT 28732)
2012/13 - 31251(FT 4074, PT 27177)
2013/14- 32077(FT 4273, PT 27804)

I chaired the Working Group in 2012 which reviewed the Governance of the UHI. I had chaired Lochaber College and then West Highland College for 18 years. From 2012-2014 I was the FE Regional Lead for the H&I. Since August 2014 I have formally been the Chair of the FERB. I have a good working relationship with the SG and SFC on what is a very complex and complicated set of relationships delivering FE in the H&I by the UHI Colleges.

Dr Michael Foxley
Chair of the UHI FERB