

Supplementary written evidence from the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), 24 March 2026

Dear Education, Children and Young People Committee Members

Thank you for considering the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) submission for the Education, Children and Young People (ECYP) committee meeting on 24 March 2026, which was cancelled due to lack of parliamentary time. Following publication of the written submissions previously received by the committee, UHI would like to place on record this additional correspondence to both provide an update on UHI Transformation and to provide the Regional Strategic Body's (RSB) response on information provided by UHI Inverness.

1. UHI Transformation

Following the submission made by UHI to the committee on 17 March 2026, UHI is pleased to advise the committee that senior leaders within the UHI Partnership met on 11 March 2026 and have now agreed a collaborative way forward which is represented in the statement in Appendix 1. The partnership will be meeting again in early May 2026 to further review and move forward with the transformation programme and looks forward to updating the committee in due course.

2. UHI Inverness Submission

The RSB wishes to provide the committee with a clear position regarding the submission provided by UHI Inverness. It is the RSB's considered view that the material submitted may not present a contemporary or objectively accurate account of the underlying facts or the actual position for the UHI Partnership. The submission contains data and information which is unverified by the RSB, incomplete, and potentially inaccurate.

As such, the university serving as the RSB would ask the committee to note the following for purposes of the official record:

2.1. UHI Partnership & RSB Data

- Under the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, the university holds the formal RSB powers of monitoring, support and oversight in respect of assigned colleges. In fulfilling these statutory responsibilities, the university is the designated and authoritative source of verified institutional data for performance, governance, finance, and compliance reporting across the region. Any data which is presented on behalf of the UHI Partnership as authoritative and a matter of record (including UHI academic partner data) should always be verified in the first instance via the RSB, taking into account any applicable data protection legislation. This is especially relevant regarding any data relating to expenditure, sector comparisons or staffing information associated with the university itself, the partnership and RSB, including the partnership contribution mechanism (on occasion referred to as the 'top slice').

- With regard to the UHI Inverness submission, any UHI partnership information, including financial data, which has been specifically provided in this submission has not been discussed or verified with the RSB prior to submission. Unless the submission has been expressly approved by the UHI Inverness Board of Management prior to submission, this document should not be regarded as an approved institutional position. Therefore, the submission and the data it contains is not recognised by the RSB as an accurate record until verified by the RSB.
- The RSB will be making UHI Inverness Board of Management aware of their concerns regarding the unverified nature of the information

2.2. UHI as the Regional Strategic Body

- UHI notes specifically that the UHI Inverness submission refers to the three RSB's which operated in Scotland, before two of the RSB's were abolished. UHI would like to make it clear that any comparison between UHI as an RSB and the Lanarkshire and Glasgow RSB's is not a valid comparison. The three RSB's varied significantly in responsibilities, size, scope and scale. To suggest that all three RSB's are the same has the potential to be misleading. Indeed, the Post 16 Education (Scotland) Act defines the University of the Highlands and Islands as an "Other Regional Strategic Body". This is especially relevant regarding the unverified data presented on staffing numbers, costs and percentage of tertiary university partnership contributions. Further and detailed information on the RSB's can be obtained from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

2.3. UHI Inverness Financial position

- The RSB notes the information which has been presented (Annex 1 Principal's Report & Financial Annexes) and would repeat the concerns outlined above. The RSB has been in dialogue with UHI Inverness on a Financial Recovery Programme (FRP) in recent weeks following an update on the forecast financial position of the institution, which was informally notified to the RSB on 29 January 2026. At the time of writing the RSB is awaiting an updated and fully developed FRP prior to discussion with the SFC on any liquidity support requirements.
- Once agreed, the FRP and any accompanying corrective action will allow the RSB to deliver the required additional assurance to the SFC as required under the Financial Memorandum between UHI Inverness and the RSB.

Yours sincerely

Alastair MacColl
Chair of Court

Vicki Nairn
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Appendix 1: UHI Transformation statement: 11 March 2026 Summit

On Wednesday 11 March 2026, senior leaders from across the UHI partnership met to discuss feedback on the draft Full Business Case (FBC) for UHI Transformation.

The meeting included UHI Court members, Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA), staff representatives and all academic partners, including Principals and Chairs. It was a positive and constructive session, with open discussion about both the benefits and challenges of working more closely together.

Senior leaders agreed to continue working together in partnership to develop clearer proposals for a new operating model. The aim is to create a model that is more connected, efficient, community-focused, and financially sustainable, within UHI's current constitutional structure.

This work is expected to be supported by a formal partnership-wide binding agreement between UHI partners involved in the change, setting a shared commitment to move forward at pace.

The group recognised the important role UHI plays for students, staff, and communities, and that future work will include:

- further development of shared services
- proposals for a new academic structure
- a review of current governance and partnership contribution arrangements

These steps will support a stronger and more effective operating model for our tertiary university.

The final FBC will be tested and refined through continued collaboration. Recommendations will then be presented to UHI Court, College Boards of Management, and other stakeholders for decision.

Senior leaders will meet again in early May 2026 to continue shaping the future direction of UHI as a collaborative tertiary partnership.

We will share further updates as this work progresses and remain committed to keeping you informed and involved.