



# UHI

## Strategic Plan 2030

Where learning means more

# Introduction

**UHI is a globally recognised tertiary institution, and we are proud to celebrate our exceptional partnership of colleges, renowned research institutes and specialist teaching centres. We are more than a traditional university — delivering both further and higher education, world-class research, and dynamic knowledge exchange across 48 locations throughout the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire. Through our networks, collaborations and impact, UHI connects our regions to the world — and brings the world to our regions.**

Our philosophy is based on our founding values of creating sustainable education for students of all ages and abilities. This ethos is underpinned by our mission to have a transformational impact on our people, communities and economy. We care passionately about our regions, and we demonstrate our commitment through our excellent student experience and by offering flexible and supported learning from access level to PhD, delivering direct skills and apprenticeship programmes linked to workforce demand, all within the same institution.

A fundamental part of our mission is to drive co-created education and research, enhanced by our unique landscape, heritage and cultures, ensuring that learning outcomes are second to none. We are also committed to affirming all of the languages, dialects and cultures throughout our regions, including

Gaelic language and culture. Across the UHI operating area we have centres of excellence and world-class thinking that are pushing the boundaries of academic and applied knowledge, where staff, students, industry and communities are collaborating to drive innovation and new ways of thinking.

UHI embraces education and research across a wide range of subjects from arts and humanities, through to the sciences and business. Through our engagement with stakeholders, business and industry we are driving economic growth, using education, knowledge exchange and cutting-edge research to enable our businesses and industry to thrive. The university acts as a catalyst to both support the economy and underpin social change by ensuring a pipeline of skilled entrepreneurial talent through our innovative, future focused curriculum.

UHI is an amazing university, and one where learning genuinely means **more.**

Our 2030 strategy will build on our success to date and take our ambition forward across five key strategic themes: teaching, learning and student support; research and innovation impact; enterprise and growth; environmental sustainability; and operational excellence.

During the lifetime of this strategy we will think, plan and act as one institution in delivering our mission and vision, and our strategic themes will be underpinned by significant transformation across our institution to deliver operational excellence and financial



**Vicki Nairn**  
UHI Principal and Vice-Chancellor

sustainability through a more streamlined, efficient and effective organisation.

In realising our ambition, this strategy will be a living document which we will adapt, flex and change to meet the evolving needs of our students, staff and stakeholders and a strategy which will be responsive to economic growth and societal change.

Our strategy takes the best of our academic reputation, world-class research and our proud history of vocational training to join the world of learning to the world of work, integrating with business and industry and underpinned by our university values of collaboration, openness, respect and excellence. The future world of work will require us all to be constantly learning, so whatever our students' stage of life or current qualification, we will provide everyone with the opportunity to keep their skills relevant and up to date as part of their learning journey.



# Mission

To have a transformational impact on the people, communities and economy of our regions.

# Vision

We will attract, nurture and retain talent in our communities, supporting innovation and social and economic prosperity. We will do this through the innovative delivery of flexible lifelong learning focused on employability and skills and impactful research.

Through a distinctive positioning on:

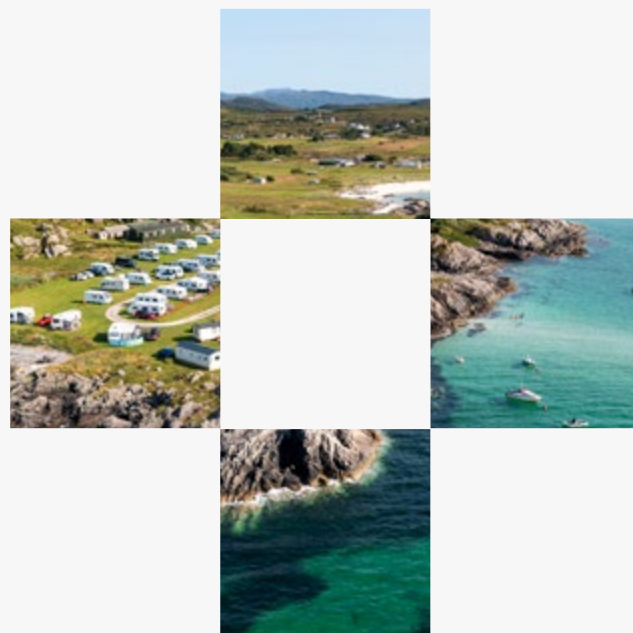
Our commitment to student employability, where **all full-time higher education students have a professional and/or work-based experience.**

Our **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **A**rts and **M**aths approach to a multi-disciplinary curriculum, producing the most professional and flexible graduates.

Our role at the **forefront of decarbonising the economy** through our innovative approaches to curriculum, research and collaborations.

Our **leadership in support of sustainable rural and island communities** to maximise economic and cultural opportunities.

Our **collaborative partner driven approach** to responding to the needs of our communities.



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We will become:

- + A destination of choice for learners responding to the regional needs of our communities, business and industry and developing our national and global positioning in curriculum and research areas of strength.
  - + A partner of choice for regional employers and stakeholders and more widely through expanding relevant national and global collaborations.
  - + An employer of choice where people are valued, supported and celebrated as one of our greatest assets.
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Underpinned by operational excellence, the UHI partnership will **think, plan and act** as one in delivering on our **mission** and **vision**

# Core values

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## Collaboration

We value people working willingly and actively together on common tasks because we seek to be a more connected organisation.

## Openness

We value an environment in which colleagues and students share ideas and communicate clearly. We aim to be approachable and encourage others to contribute and speak up and we ensure others feel their contribution is valued.

## Respect

We value others in the workplace, are mindful of each other's capabilities, perspectives and backgrounds, and are thoughtful about our impact on others.

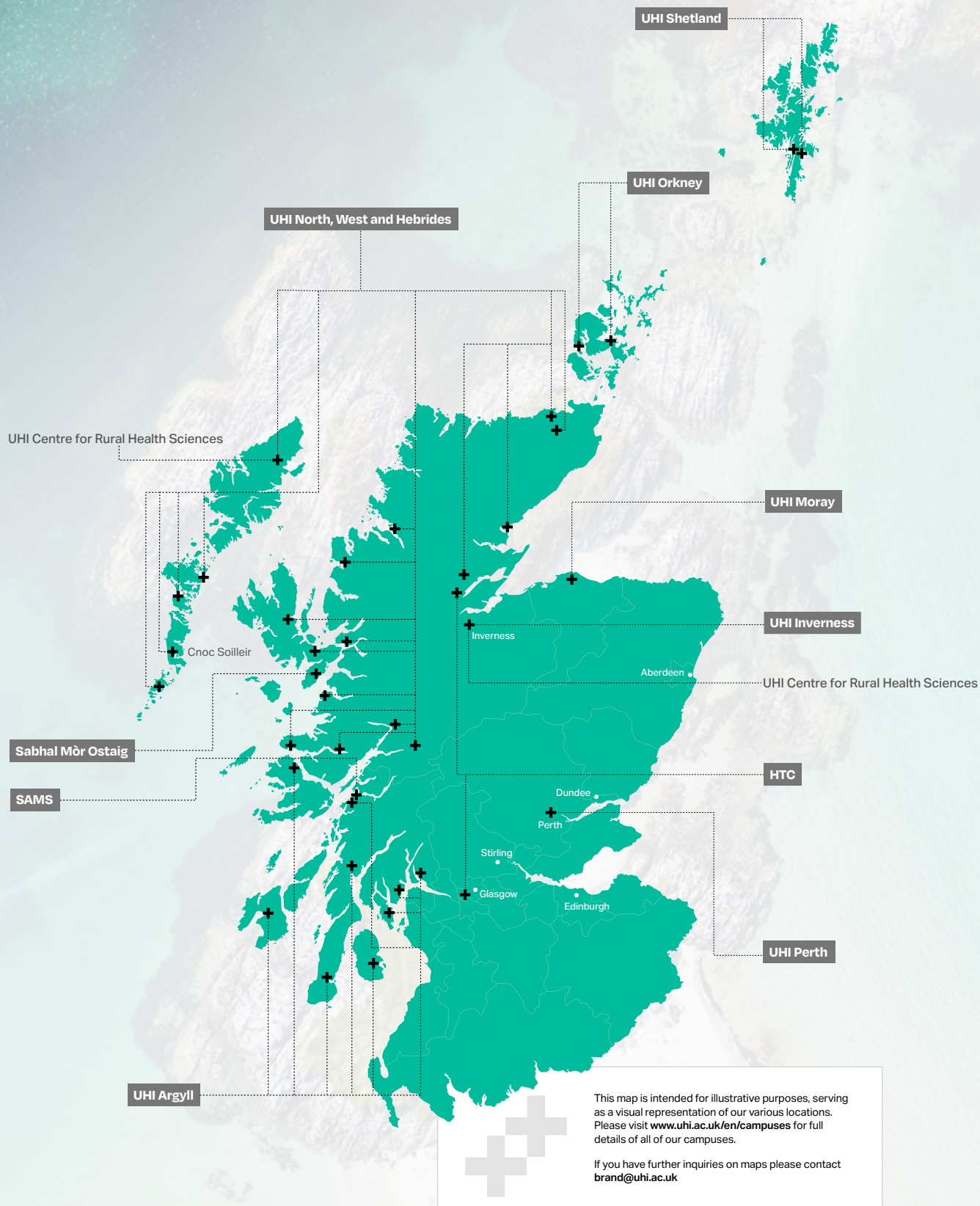
## Excellence

We value a sense of purpose in our work by taking responsibility in our performance and behaviour, and we celebrate collectively in our achievements and those of our students and graduates.

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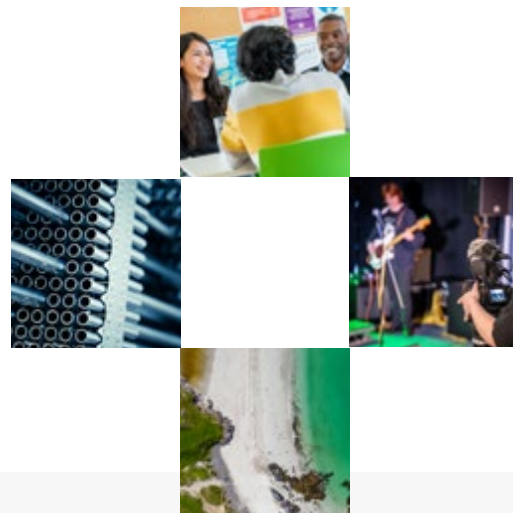
# Who we are

UHI is a regional college and university partnership, serving the communities of the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire.





# What we are



## Home of connected learning

We take the best of our growing academic reputation, world-class research and our proud history of vocational training to join the world of learning to the world of work.

We involve industry experts to ensure our courses teach the skills employers are looking for and match these to our students' ambitions. Our established blended learning approach connects our student community here and across the world.

## Regions of world-class research quality

All across our area we have centres of excellence and world-class thinking that are pushing the boundaries of academic and applied knowledge, where staff and students are playing a part in changing our regions and the world.

## Inclusive

We are proud to be different. Where learning means more. We offer flexible and supported learning from access level to PhD. Where students can start where they need to and progress as far as they want, at a pace that is right for them - all within the same institution.

The future world of work will require us to be constantly learning, so whatever the stage of life or current qualification, we provide everyone with the opportunity to keep their skills relevant and up to date.

## Supportive, caring and personal

We take time to help our students find their unique learner journey. We care passionately not just about our students and staff but also our regions, people, communities and future prosperity.

We believe that every individual has the right to feel valued, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is not just a moral obligation, but also fundamental to our aim of providing flexible and supported learning opportunities.

## In the world's most beautiful country

Experience a stunning and inspiring backdrop, heritage and culture and access Scotland's natural beauty and resources where opportunities are limitless.

# Our priorities

**UHI**

## Teaching, learning and student support

To deliver a high-quality connected curriculum built on personalising the learner journey, giving more choices and opportunities to more people.

Increasing our reputation and reach through our distinctive curriculum, partnerships with business and industry, innovative delivery and student experience and success.

## Research and innovation impact

To enhance our research impact, ensuring it is internationally ranked, industry linked and world leading.

Increasing our national and international reputation through research and innovation excellence and broadening our fields of research in emerging areas of strength which are regionally focused with global reach.

## Enterprise and growth

To embrace an entrepreneurial spirit based on strong economic growth for our institution and our communities, growing and diversifying our student population, delivering innovation, employability and enterprise skills and supporting innovation.

Increasing recognition of our position as an anchor institution supporting our communities, developing skills and knowledge-led solutions and influencing regional and national policy.

## Environmental sustainability

To be a sustainable and socially responsible institution, contributing to the sustainability of our communities, our economy and our planet.

Increasing awareness of our central and transformational role in decarbonising the economy and progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in our communities and beyond.

## Operational excellence

To be a fully integrated, sustainable and people-oriented organisation.

Increasing recognition of UHI as a financially sustainable, well-managed organisation by funders and stakeholders.

A young woman with long brown hair is wearing a white VR headset and a blue jacket over a grey t-shirt. She is holding a white VR controller in her right hand and is smiling. The background shows a computer desk with a monitor displaying a red and blue abstract image.

# Teaching, learning and support

We will be known for our creative, student-centred and innovative learning and teaching delivered through a modern and digitally enabled curriculum, in an inclusive and stimulating environment regardless of study mode, level, or location.

We will be a leader in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) education with multi-disciplinary curriculum producing holistic and resilient graduates.

We will be recognised for our excellence in supporting student engagement, success, personal development and wellbeing.



# Teaching, learning and support

## Commitments

### Curriculum

- + Deliver a cohesive, sustainable and relevant curriculum which strengthens our competitive position and optimises student recruitment.
- + Offer integrated learning pathways from school to further and higher education using academic, vocational and work-based routes to maximise opportunity for all, helping learners realise their potential and progress to positive destinations.
- + Adopt a multi-disciplinary STEAM approach to our provision harnessing expertise across the university and fostering closer collaboration with STEAM organisations regionally and globally.
- + Work in collaboration with our students, communities and industry partners to ensure our curriculum is responsive to their needs and aligned with local, national and international priorities allowing us to retain and attract students to our area.

### Learning and teaching enhancement

- + Engage our students in learning activities and experiences that support their aspirations and prepare them for their next step.
- + Empower and support our learners to positively shape and influence their learning experiences.
- + Harness digital technologies and spaces for learning, teaching and assessment to support learner engagement in meaningful and connected learning experiences.
- + Move towards a single tertiary enhancement environment for further and higher education.
- + Sustain a culture of quality enhancement across all activity which improves the student experience, increases student success and enables all students to achieve their full potential.

### Student enhancement

- + Develop and promote our reputation for excellence in our student experience and support throughout the student journey demonstrated by greater student satisfaction, achievement and positive outcomes.
- + Cultivate a more inclusive learning environment, enriching experiences and collaborating with staff, students and stakeholders to support, promote and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion.
- + Work in partnership with HISA (Highlands and Islands Students' Association) to proactively engage with the learner voice, ensuring that all our learners have access to exceptional support in their education and their wellbeing.

### Gaelic language and culture

- + Champion Gaelic language and culture in our communities through curriculum, research and student experience.
- + Recognise and support the linguistic and cultural diversity across our regions.

### Outcomes by 2030

- + Become a destination of choice for new learners.
- + Attract more students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds.
- + Provide a curriculum centred on our students' needs and focused on their learning journey.
- + Provide lifelong learning and skills relevant and responsive to emerging regional, national and international need.
- + Deliver a high quality physical and digital learning environment.

### Measures

- + Student satisfaction
- + Student success
- + Student employability
- + Student access

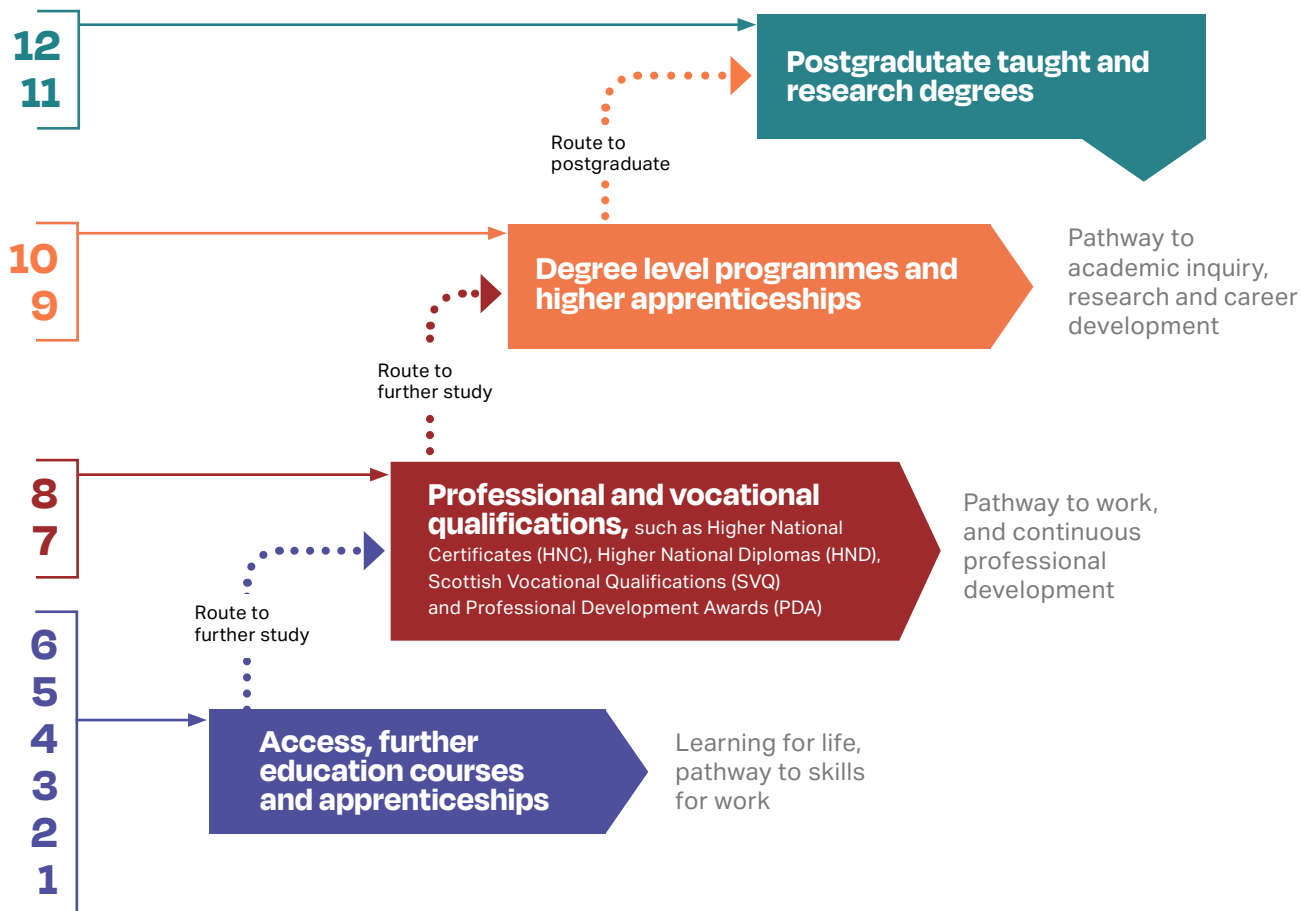
### Focused strategies

- + Learning and teaching enhancement
- + Curriculum
- + Student experience and support

# UHI access and progression routes

Providing seamless pathways and removing barriers for students, allowing them to find their own unique learner journey.

## SCQF level



Without UHI I wouldn't have been able to gain my apprenticeship. It all started when I completed a schools link engineering course while still at school. That led on to a national certificate and then all the way through to me graduating with a degree in electrical and electronic engineering. I have so much to thank UHI for.

Liam Elder  
BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering graduate





# Research and innovation impact

We will be recognised for our impactful world-class and internationally excellent research and knowledge exchange inspired by our environment and culture and supporting regional inward investment.

By developing our research strengths and enhancing our collaborations and connection with industry, we will contribute to key global challenges.



# Research and innovation impact

## Commitments

### Excellence and impact

- + Increase the proportion of our research output recognised as internationally excellent and world-leading.
- + Expand our fields of research recognising emerging areas of strength, focusing on positive impacts for our communities and directly informing innovation activity in key sectors.
- + Enhance our profile for research and knowledge exchange through strengthening our collaboration and partnerships.
- + Support research excellence through developing the capability and capacity of staff to become research leaders.
- + Secure enhanced commercialisation of research and knowledge exchange output.
- + Build awareness and communication of our research expertise, partnerships and successes.
- + Source strategic investment in PhD studentships allied to our Research Excellence Framework (REF) development plan.

### Research environment

- + Create a vibrant research environment which builds on our collective strengths, supports innovation, and creates opportunities for inter-disciplinary activity.
- + Develop an institutional culture in which academic staff actively engage in research and scholarship that enhances curriculum quality and student experience.
- + Establish a sustainable researcher sabbatical scheme and programme of professional development and training, including opportunities for professional services staff to increase awareness of our research activities and ambitions.



### Outcomes by 2030

- + Further elevate our research reputation.
- + Be known for our strong and vibrant research environment for students and staff.
- + Become a partner of choice in national and global collaborations.
- + Diversify research and knowledge exchange income.
- + Enhance commercialisation of research and knowledge exchange outputs.

### Measures

- + REF performance
- + Research student numbers and satisfaction
- + Research and knowledge exchange income

### Focused strategy

- + Research, impact and knowledge exchange



# Enterprise and growth

We will be a high performing and innovative university, nurturing an enterprise mindset in our students, staff and across our communities and partnerships to positively impact on the economy and society.

We will help transform our regions by widening access to education at all levels, supporting the skills needs of our regional employers, and inward talent attraction through developing our national and global positioning.

We will build productive and beneficial partnerships influencing positive and collaborative change through engagement with government agencies, education institutions, and our communities.

# Enterprise and growth

## Commitments

### Income diversification and commercialisation

- + Create and seize opportunities to develop and access new income sources and commercially viable business development, reducing our reliance on government funding and strengthen the long-term resilience of our institution.
- + Increase our profile and levels of philanthropic giving through our engagement and coordination with donors, supporters and alumni.

### Student recruitment and growth

- + Place greater emphasis in our recruitment activities on UHI as a study destination of choice, embracing our difference and championing our excellence in student support and experience.
- + Develop our admissions processes to be more student-centred and streamlined to drive speed and personalisation in our offer making.
- + Grow partnerships and recruitment in new regions, both domestically and internationally, specifically creating and renewing recruitment in North America, Asia and Scandinavia.
- + Secure financially sustainable student accommodation across our regions to support our student recruitment aspirations.

### Economic development

- + Lead growth in the regional economy, providing employment, lifelong learning pathways, research and innovation-led impacts and supporting growth of Gaelic language and culture.
- + Enhance our role in community planning and contribute to reduced inequality, improved services, enhanced training and skills development.
- + Maximise our involvement in growth deals and the green freeport, acting as an anchor institution in our regions to deliver regeneration and high-quality jobs, global trade and investment, and thriving and sustainable communities.

### Engagement

- + Strengthen engagement with our alumni, developing opportunities and growing our global community of alumni ambassadors.
- + Engage with partners to optimise sustainable business opportunities.
- + Engage with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to secure appropriate levels of funded activity that support evidence-based growth plans in further and higher education.
- + Embed an enterprise culture with staff and students and within our provision at all levels, with innovative approaches to delivering employability and enterprise skills.

### Outcomes by 2030

- + Be a driver of regional economic growth and social recovery.
- + Be a key contributor to talent retention and attraction in our regions.
- + Attract more non-SFC funded students.
- + Produce confident and enterprising graduates.
- + Increase impactful strategic partnerships.
- + Secure more diverse income streams to support long-term financial sustainability.

### Measures

- + Commercial income
- + Philanthropic/fundraising income
- + Student numbers

### Focused strategies

- + Economic development
- + Student recruitment and admissions
- + Advancement





# Environmental sustainability

We will be champions for rural and island sustainable communities. We will take a leading role in supporting environmentally sustainable economic development in fragile rural systems across our regions, protecting some of the most important and globally significant ecosystems.

We will be well on track to becoming a 'one planet, net zero' university, energy secure and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We will contribute to wider themes across the environmental sustainability agenda and decarbonisation of the economy through areas of recognised curriculum and research strength.

# Environmental sustainability

## Commitments

### Net zero and just transition

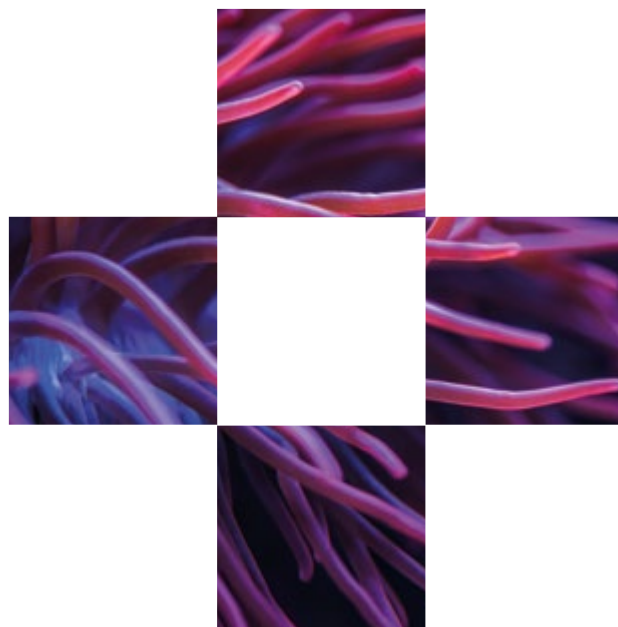
- + Embed sustainability into all areas of our operations to achieve net zero by 2040, ensuring this becomes part of our normal working practices and our natural mindset.
- + Create a UHI Net Zero Carbon Hub to strategically align and integrate our activities to deliver high impact outcomes, building capacity in strategically significant research disciplines and accelerating the transformation of our infrastructure, assets, operations and corporate services.
- + Provide leadership in the support of species conservation across our regions, impacted by climate change, for example through our research expertise in the role of peatlands in climate change mitigation.
- + Increase biodiversity by managing our campus grounds and greenspaces to deliver healthy and thriving ecosystems.

### Sustainability leadership and engagement

- + Engage with partners to consider regional approaches to climate solutions, sharing best practice and resources including the local authorities within our regions, enterprise companies, Scottish Funding Council, industry and other stakeholders.
- + Work collaboratively with students on issues such as fuel poverty, poverty and inequality, climate and jobs that resonate with just transition and climate justice.

### Sustainability in skills, curriculum and research

- + Develop innovative teaching practices and pedagogies to reduce our carbon footprint, embed sustainability skills in all areas of our curriculum and champion impactful research and innovation that supports the transition to net zero carbon economies.
- + Work with key stakeholders to scale up the skills capacity in renewable energy, developing new curriculum and training to support initiatives such as ScotWind, the Islands Growth Deal TalEntEd programme and Opportunity Cromarty Firth.



### Outcomes by 2030

- + On course to become Energy Secure UHI by 2040.
- + Active contributors to progressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- + Become leaders in embedding sustainability in all levels of our provision.
- + Produce graduates equipped with knowledge and skills to contribute to a more sustainable future.

### Measures

- + Carbon emissions
- + Biodiversity in campus plans and greenspace management
- + Sustainability in the curriculum

### Focused strategy

- + Sustainability





# Operational excellence

We will be a fully integrated, financially sustainable and people-orientated organisation that delivers outstanding teaching, research and knowledge exchange from a solid foundation of the very best professional services, systems and processes.



# Operational excellence

## Programme of transformation

We are undertaking a wide-ranging staff and student led programme of transformation to ensure we become a more integrated and connected university.

Through investing in services, systems and estates, we will create a collaborative and empowered working and learning environment which will positively enhance all aspects of our staff and student experience and curriculum, underpinned by our culture of equality, diversity and inclusion for all.

## Commitments

### Structure, governance and shared services

- + Implement a new partnership operating model and simplified governance structures to allow us to operate as a single organisation.
- + Implement shared services, systems and standard approaches to internal processes which are defined and led by the overarching partnership strategy and operating model.
- + Facilitate merging of willing UHI partners to create centres of expertise that deliver economies of scale while remaining responsive to place-based needs.
- + Develop collective partnership-wide planning to inform effective, evidence-based decision making founded on consistent data, standardised systems and approaches to data insight and market intelligence.
- + Become a financially sustainable organisation that collectively manages resources to deliver our ambitions.

### People and culture

- + Create a collaborative culture where all staff and students feel part of a wider single institution invested in its regions and environment.
- + Enhance equality and inclusion to ensure all staff and students can be the best version of themselves, regardless of their socio-economic background or protected characteristics.
- + Reward staff for high performance, provide access to development opportunities and support for their wellbeing becoming an employer of choice in the sector.
- + Protection of local jobs through facilitating a model where staff can be located anywhere within the partnership.
- + Implement an organisation-wide professional development framework and training programme.

### Physical and digital excellence

- + Create safe, flexible and inclusive estates that are well-equipped and support our curriculum delivery, research and innovation, and excellent staff and student experience.
- + Invest in our digital capability and resilience in evidence-driven priority areas that provide modern and enabling technologies to meet our mission and vision.

### Outcomes by 2030

- + Partnership financial sustainability.
- + Operational savings secured through streamlined governance, mergers, shared services and single systems and approaches.
- + Attract and retain talented and diverse staff.
- + Optimise physical infrastructure and digital excellence.

### Measures

- + Financial efficiency
- + Staff profile and satisfaction

### Focused strategies

- + Financial sustainability
- + People and culture
- + Equality, diversity and inclusion

# Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

**Teaching, learning and student support**

**Research and innovation impact**

**Enterprise and growth**

**Environmental sustainability**

**Operational excellence**

# Teaching, learning and support

## Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

High level measure	Detailed measure	Indicative target
<b>SPI 1: Student satisfaction</b>	Overall student satisfaction from sector surveys	<p>2% above the Scottish Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) average for further education students</p> <p>2% above the National Student Survey (NSS) Scottish average (undergraduate higher education)</p> <p>In the top 5 Scottish institutions in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)</p>
<b>SPI 2: Student success</b>	<p>Full-time, further education students successfully achieving a recognised qualification</p> <p>Full-time, Scottish-domiciled undergraduate higher education entrants achieving an award or returning to study</p> <p>Proportion of further education students progressing to higher education</p>	<p>2% above the Scottish further education student average</p> <p>Close the gap to the Scottish sector average</p> <p>Year-on-year increase</p>
<b>SPI 3: Student employability</b>	<p>Leavers in positive destinations (work or further study) from sector surveys</p> <p>Full-time degree graduates in professional occupations</p>	<p>Achieve the Scottish average for further education colleges and higher education institutions</p> <p>Close the gap to the Scottish sector average</p>
<b>SPI 4: Student access</b>	<p>Share of entrants to full-time undergraduate degrees within our operating area</p> <p>Proportion of students with care experience</p> <p>Proportion of students from disadvantaged areas</p> <p>Proportion of higher education entrants articulating with advanced standing from other Scottish colleges</p>	<p>Year-on-year increase</p> <p>Achieve further and higher education Scottish Funding Council outcome targets</p> <p>Achieve further and higher education Scottish Funding Council outcome targets</p> <p>Achieve Scottish Government target of 75%</p>



# Research and innovation impact

## Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

High level measure	Detailed measure	Indicative target
<b>SPI 5: Research Excellence Framework (REF)</b>	REF performance - submission size and average grade point average (GPA) achieved	Average GPA of 3.0 and 2% increase in submission size of full-time equivalent (FTE)
<b>SPI 6: Research student numbers and satisfaction</b>	Number of research degree students	10% growth (FTEs) by 2030
	Overall student satisfaction in sector survey	2% above the sectoral mean
<b>SPI 7: Research and knowledge exchange income</b>	Level and diversification of external research grant and knowledge exchange-related income and success in larger-scale grant capture	10% over 5-year period (taking account of cyclical research funding)

# Enterprise and growth

## Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

High level measure	Detailed measure	Indicative target
<b>SPI 8: Commercial income</b>	Total level of commercial income	Increase by 10% year-on-year
<b>SPI 9: Philanthropic/ fundraising income</b>	Donated income secured and cash income received from individuals, trusts and foundations and corporate donors	Figures to be confirmed
<b>SPI 10: Student numbers</b>	Volume of further education credits	Achieve Scottish Funding Council further education credit minimum threshold in line with funding guidance and regional demand
	Scottish Funding Council funded non-controlled and controlled student full-time equivalent (FTE)	Achieve Scottish Funding Council funded full-time equivalent (FTE) targets
	Non-Scottish Funding Council funded student FTEs: Remainder of the UK (RUK) and international students	Increase remainder of the UK (RUK) by 20% and international by 25% year-on-year (excluding transnational education)

# Environmental sustainability

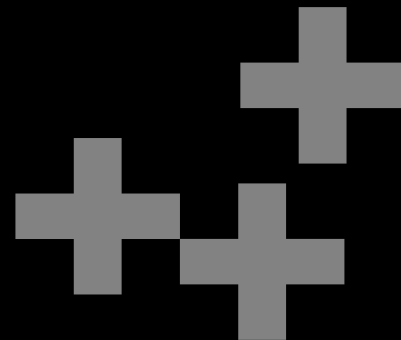
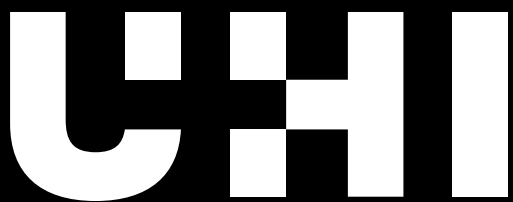
## Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

High level measure	Detailed measure	Indicative target
<b>SPI 11: Carbon emissions</b>	Carbon dioxide equivalent CO <sub>2</sub> e and/or greenhouse gas (GHG) tonnes	75% reduction in CO <sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030
<b>SPI 12: Campus biodiversity</b>	Area in square metres and percentage of campus grounds managed for biodiversity and carbon insetting	At least 30% of campus ground managed by 2030
<b>SPI 13: Curriculum</b>	Proportion of courses including sustainability/climate change content	100% of courses by 2030

# Operational excellence

## Strategic Priority Indicators (SPIs)

High level measure	Detailed measure	Indicative target
<b>SPI 14: Financial efficiency</b>	Partnership staff costs as a percentage of income	Broadly in the range of 2nd quartile of cost ratios for universities and colleges
	Partnership/regional strategic body (RSB) cash flow	60 days liquidity minimum during transformation and recovery phase which equates to £6 million unrestricted cash balance
<b>SPI 15: Staff profile and satisfaction</b>	Workforce demographics and staff views on belonging and inclusion from staff surveys	Targets agreed following establishment of baselines



## **UHI partnership**

**UHI Argyll**

**UHI Inverness**

**UHI Moray**

**UHI North, West and Hebrides**

**UHI Orkney**

**UHI Perth**

**UHI Shetland**

**Highland Theological College (HTC)**

**Sabhal Mòr Ostaig**

**Scottish Association for Marine Science**



**Where learning  
means more**

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