

## **Item: 7**

**College Management Council Sub-committee: 2 November 2020.**

**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 key issues to be addressed during the academic year and key activities during the last few months, from August to October 2020.

### **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 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **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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## **8. Appendix**

Appendix 1: Paper from Highlands and Islands Students Association.

# HISA Depute Report

## Key Issues

The key issues I would like to address this year as HISA Depute for Orkney College UHI all fall under the umbrella of students' wellbeing. I believe such a result can be accomplished through dialogue, teamwork, cooperation, and inclusion. Students' wellbeing will be fostered by a constructive attitude of having care: towards the self, other people, and the environment. Therefore, mental health, sanitary support, teamwork between departments, environmental awareness, and opportunities for creative outlets are the main paths I would like to develop. I am looking forward to take inspiration from the variety of students' backgrounds to create an atmosphere of inclusion and togetherness for UHI, in such a way that students will feel empowered enough to bring their ideas into bloom and feel supported in their everyday life. As a HISA officer, I will be a stable online presence to help students to cope with stress and obstacles, as well as offering creative initiatives to expand one's interests.

## Key Activities

During the last months, I introduced myself to students via email and on online platforms, and increased HISA Orkney Facebook page's activity through regular posting in the attempt to prompt student engagement. I worked to boost the output of original content. This produced excellent results, increasing the popularity of our Facebook page and therefore our reach.

In August I reached out to the Shetland Green Team and our HISA Shetland Depute for collaboration opportunities. The aim was to be able to engage with Orkney and Shetland students as a whole for multiple initiatives. This gave excellent results during our Freshers local events, and we hope to continue this collaboration throughout the year.

In the same period, I shared content concerning the Festival of Innovation promoted by SIE, in the hope of getting students involved in regional projects related to education and student life, but the engagement rates on this occasion were disappointing.

Regular signposting of the Mental Health Services available to students and of OC UHI news took place and still take place on the HISA Orkney Facebook page.

Freshers took place in the first three weeks of September, and was a big event that required hard work and coordination both on a regional and local level. Regional events such as the HISA TRAD fest, HISA Presents, the Quiz Night, and HISA Yoga sessions were successful in engaging with UHI students and opening doors for collaboration with other SAs across Scotland. Orkney local events consisted of a photo competition launched by HISA Orkney in partnership with the Orkney Archaeology Society, a Quiz hosted by the Shetland Green Team, a workshop with STAR, free online DnD sessions and a free online Fitness Session. Prizes were given to the winners of the competitions and to those who participated to the STAR workshop. It is worth mentioning that the online DnD sessions were open to all UHI students, and were highly successful: they allowed students from

different parts of Scotland to get in touch and establish bonds for future events, as well as provide HISA Orkney with excellent feedback. These activities were followed by the Find Your Group project, as well as by a series of recorded presentations by Amnesty International, SYP, Y-People, ORSAS, VAO Orkney, Scottish Women's Aid. Student Engagement Rates were encouraging.

I am currently working on a mini-series to be promoted on HISA Orkney's Facebook and Instagram pages called "Shelf-Indulgence", in the hope to get students to share their favourite authors, tales, and books. This is one of the many ideas I am working on in the hope of prompting the creation of more student societies in Orkney, creating a more varied and inclusive student environment.

In September, I got the chance to interact directly with students: on one hand, a limited amount of students reached out to us showing interest in becoming class reps; on the other hand, international students got in touch with us, asking some advice on how to settle down in Orkney and meet people. Interacting actively with them was absolutely rewarding and allowed me to involve them in the Freshers events, to get to know them and to reassure them of the fact that behind the title "Orkney Depute President" there is a face, there is a name, and there is a student. Feedback was positive, I will therefore keep this type of approachability in the hope of continuing to improve student engagement. Lastly, advertisement of the Orkney staff post officially started. The hope is to find the right candidate before the Christmas holidays.

In October, I will dedicate a large portion of my time to finishing my induction and contribute to Black History Month, collaborating with HISA regional staff and local groups. I got recently in touch with Orkney Oot Wae Racism, and look forward to collaborating with them. I have also just become part of the Scottish Youth Forum, and hope to be able to work with them in the future. I am planning on increasing student interaction through both regular short update videos posted and sent to students fortnightly and informal cup of tea & chat sessions hosted on Webex.