



Highlands and Islands Students' Association

Appointment of CEO



www.hisa.uhi.ac.uk

Welcome from the HISA President



Thank you for your interest in joining the Highlands & Islands Students' Association as our new Chief Executive Officer. Over the ten years since its creation, HISA has developed significantly thanks to the partnership work between its professional staff and student officers. This is your opportunity to lead it through from its development stage to maturity and become part of our story.

As the recognised students' association of the University of the Highlands & Islands and its academic partners we lead a wide range of work including managing the Student Voice Representative system which is vital for both representation and as part of the quality enhancement system. We also support students to organise clubs and societies and hold events such as Welcome Week and organise the annual student and staff awards. This is just a small snapshot of what we do, and our fundamental role is to make sure that the student voice is represented and heard in all key decision-making spaces locally, regionally and nationally to improve education across the Highlands & Islands, Perthshire and Moray.

As Chief Executive you will lead our team of career professional staff and work with the elected officer team and the Trustee Board to deliver HISA's agreed Strategic Plan and in year priorities. You will provide continuity within the organisation and provide leadership to staff to support the delivery of the elected student officer objectives while maintaining clear long-term vision. You will need good people skills to manage staff and relationships across the HISA's geographic spread and will also be expected to develop strong working relationships with the senior management within the University and it's Academic Partners to ensure HISA can continue to deliver on areas like the Student Partnership Agreement.

The UHI Partnership is not immune to the challenges being faced by the further and higher education in Scotland, but the UHI Partnership is much further advanced in addressing these challenges than most and is currently in the middle of a major transformation project to ensure long term sustainability. A key part of your role will be to support the student officers in responding to this major change programme to ensure student voice is at the heart of it, whilst continuing to deliver business as usual. HISA will also need to change over the next few years to respond to financial challenges and to ensure that everything we do is focused on delivering for our 26,000 members and that their voice is heard loud and clear.

Within this pack, you'll find out more about the role and how with your help, we'll continue to make things better for students. Please do get in touch if you would like more information or to arrange a confidential chat.

Xander McDade

HISA Cross Campus President & Chair of the Trustee Board



The Highlands and Islands Students' Association

The Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) is the democratic voice for students across the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), representing learners at every level of study—from further education and apprenticeships through to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Our representation spans the full breadth of the UHI partnership, working closely with ten Academic Partners to ensure students are supported, included, and empowered wherever and however they study. These partners are:

- UHI Argyll; UHI Inverness;
- UHI Moray;
- UHI North, West & Hebrides;
- UHI Orkney;
- UHI Perth;
- UHI Shetland;
- Highland Theological College;
- the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS); and
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Students within our community engage in learning through a wide variety of modes and locations—on campus, online, in the workplace, and via blended approaches—reflecting the unique geography and diversity of the UHI area. Because our students' experiences are so varied, it is vital that we hear and amplify every voice. HISA is led by an Executive Committee of student officers who are elected annually to serve in a range of portfolio roles. They are supported by a dedicated staff team that provides the administrative, operational, and policy expertise needed to turn student priorities into meaningful action and positive change.

The Highlands and Islands Students' Association

HISA is registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Altogether, we are a team of around forty people working across the UHI area. Some of us are full-time and others part-time, but all are united by a commitment to enhancing the learning experience and championing the interests of all UHI students.

We also have a strong commitment to equality and diversity. HISA are proud to uphold fair employment standards as a Real Living Wage employer and to promote inclusive recruitment and progression as a Disability Confident Employer.





About UHI

The University of the Highlands and the Islands (UHI) is a university made up of 10 academic partners which provides both further and higher education.

UHI are a diverse and flexible partnership serving our communities and connected to their needs. Our greatest strength is the diversity and flexibility of our partnership, and this empowers us to deliver more.

UHI offer flexible and supported learning from access level to PhD, which suits more people at more levels for more reasons.

UHI have 26,000 students and are proud of our unique place and deep roots in our communities, and this makes our teaching and research more connected to their needs.

Further information about UHI can be found on their website:

www.uhi.ac.uk





What students think about HISA

HISA has had a very successful couple of years, delivering services and satisfaction to students. This satisfaction is demonstrated via its National Student Survey satisfaction score which has risen from 67% to 77% in the past 2 years, and a significant increase in student membership of our clubs and societies and student involvement in representation.

"As a UHI student, I have found HISA to be of invaluable benefit. HISA have supported in helping me found new 'student led' groups - improving the future development of interdepartmental collaboration, cross-campus connectivity, plus the wider community involvement of these projects - which has been hugely appreciated"

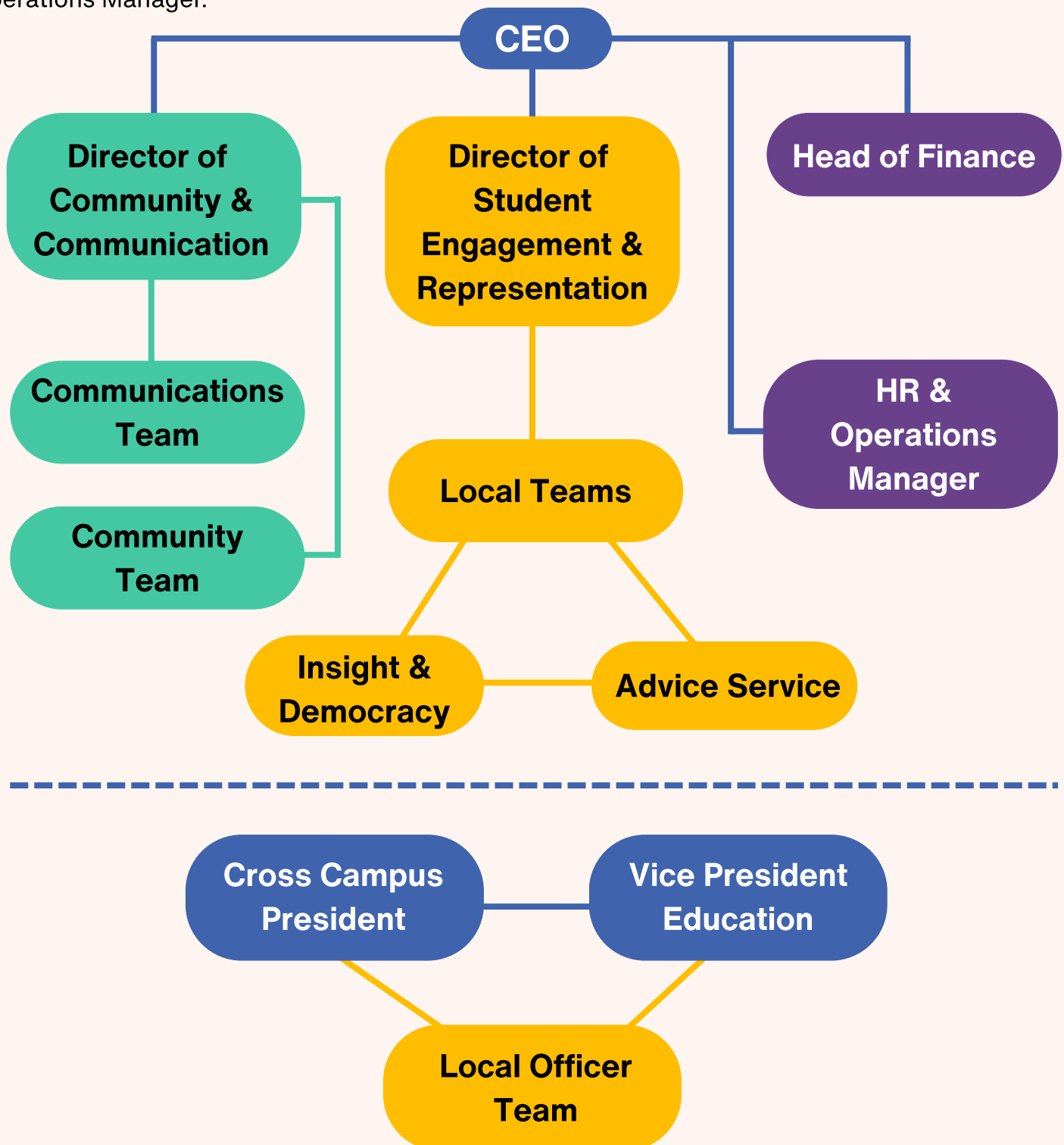
"HISA has been unbelievably helpful to us in getting our new club up and running, from patiently walking us through admin processes to generously granting us funds. Thanks to their help, we've been able to host social events and author talks and join the Scottish Association of Writers, which has opened numerous doors to all of our talented fledgling writers. Only one year in, UHI Scribblers has already become an incredible academic and social resource for students of all years. Thank you, HISA - you're making a big difference!"

"HISA's continued support for queer/trans students during our current period of turmoil has made me feel safer to be involved in the student community - I am so grateful for their openness and kindness"

The Team

This is a senior role and reports directly to the Board of Trustees. The role holder is a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the wider senior management team.

The Chief Executive Officer manages the Director of Student Engagement & Representation, the Director of Community Engagement & Communication, the Head of Finance and the HR & Operations Manager.



Chief Executive Officer

The role of the Chief Executive Officer is to provide strategic support to the student officers within our student-led organisation; and to provide support and leadership to the senior leadership team and our Board of Trustees.

The post-holder is required to provide an interface between the Trustee Board and the leadership team, and between other key decision-making bodies within the Students' Association, converting policy and strategy into action.

Our CEO will be a source of continuity within the Students' Association, providing vision and expertise to drive the Association forward towards organisational goals whilst ensuring that the Association is structured to facilitate Student Officers' work towards organisational objectives.

As a key contact and partner with UHI stakeholders, the CEO is required to work towards aligning the Students' Associations progression into the UHI's strategy. The CEO should also ensure that all aspects of organisational risk are identified, monitored and managed.



Main Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership:

- Working with the Trustee Board and in collaboration with all key stakeholders to ensure that HISA's strategy will drive the organisation forward through new initiatives whilst meeting the required charitable objectives.
- Lead the development and delivery of HISA's strategy, involving Trustees, student officers, staff members and other stakeholders as appropriate.
- Ensure that strategic plans are sustainable and linked to viable long-term outcomes.
- Ensure that the organisation fully utilises the skills, experience and potential of all staff to meet HISA's goals and objectives.
- Lead grant application, sponsorship and commercial activity to generate income including making applications where relevant and managing relationships with funders and commercial organisations.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

- Ensure that the SLT work effectively together and with the student officers, fostering a culture of trust, collaboration and inclusivity.
- Provide effective and visible value-based leadership, empowering, encouraging and supporting the team to reach their full potential.
- Lead and provide strategic direction to the senior leadership team and other staff with the Association's values and mission in mind, helping to develop strategy, policy and procedures for the sustainability and future proofing of the Association.
- Set and monitor individual objectives, KPI's and goals linked to the long-term strategic aims of the Association.



Main Responsibilities

Operational Management:

- Set/manage the annual budget and keep within the agreed budget. Maintain oversight and scrutiny of the Association's financial performance, providing regular forecasts, commentary and analysis to the Trustee Board.
- Review and develop relevant key performance measures to ensure that the Trustee Board have clear oversight of progress towards strategic goals.
- Ensure there are systems to measure value and impact within the Association, to achieve financial efficiency and the delivery of quality services and opportunities for members.
- Take responsibility for the Health and Safety oversight of the organisation and maintain and promote a healthy and safe environment for the Association's staff, volunteers and visitors.

Student Leadership & Governance:

- Support the Trustee Board and ensure there is induction and ongoing training for the development of Trustees.
- Provide mentorship and support to elected leadership of the organisation, briefing them on all relevant work themes and helping to align their manifesto goals and ambitions to the strategy of the Association.
- Ensure compliance with all legal and financial requirements, and with OSCR.
- Ensure that successes are celebrated to enhance the positive image of the Association to its members and stakeholders.



Other Responsibilities

- To be responsible for organisational compliance ensuring relevant legislation and policies are enacted to include but not limited to Education Act 1994, charity, health & safety, data protection, and employment laws.
- Behave professionally in line with our values and with integrity, drive own continuous professional development and remain transparent in actions.
- Ensure that the Association has a strategic approach to creating a positive reputation with all Members.
- To develop and maintain strong relationships and a partnership approach across all work themes with the UHI partners, local organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.
- To lead, manage and grow the Association whilst driving a culture of diversity, inclusivity, high performance and collectivism and leading the values, behaviours and mission of the organisation.
- To undertake other duties that are within the scope and spirit of the role that may from time to time be reasonably required.
- Adhere to all relevant HISA policies, procedures, and governing documents at all times, including the staff code of conduct.



Key Relationships

Responsible for maintaining good relationships with:

Responsible for identifying, developing, and maintaining good relationships with:

- Elected student leadership of HISA;
- The HISA Trustee Board;
- Senior managers and all direct reports;
- All colleagues across HISA;
- Key UHI Stakeholders e.g. University/Academic Partner senior management;
- External stakeholders and suppliers relevant to the work of the organisation.



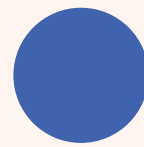
Person Specification



The successful candidate must be able to demonstrate all the essential criteria

Experience	
Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant senior management experience in an organisation of similar complexity in a relevant context• Proven track record of forging successful partnerships with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders• Experience of effectively managing financial and human resources at strategic level and through budget holders• Demonstrable experience and evidence of success in the management of growing, building and enhancing internal systems, policies and structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience of growing and diversifying income streams• Experience of working in a democratic environment coaching, supporting, and empowering elected officers or similar groups of people to lead their organisation
Qualifications	
Essential Criteria	Desirable Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A degree and/or significant relevant experience in a senior management role• Evidence of continuous personal and professional development e.g. Professional management qualification• A current drivers license	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideally a management qualification

How To Apply



All applications must be made through our online recruitment portal

[Access the application here](#)

This post will close at **10:00 AM on Monday, 10th November 2025**.

First-stage interviews will take place on **Thursday, 20th November, via Teams (online)**.

If you wish to have an informal conversation about this role please contact:

Xander McDade, HISA President and Trustee Board Chair, hisa.president@uhi.ac.uk

or **Nat Hales**, HR & Operations Manager, hisa.hr@uhi.ac.uk

Further Information

- This post is on Grade G £55,000 - £60,000 per annum. Offers of employment will normally be made at the lowest point on the grade.
- This is a full-time, permanent role within HISA's Senior Leadership Team.
- Annual leave entitlement is 39 days pro rata, which includes 9 public holidays and 3 Christmas Closure days.
- The postholder will be expected to be based within a reasonable commutable distance of a UHI campus and will be required to travel around the UHI partnership as required. A current drivers license is required as part of the person specification.
- HISA currently offers hybrid working but there is an expectation that at least 60% of your working hours to be based in a HISA office on a UHI campus.

This post undertakes regulated work with children and vulnerable adults, therefore membership of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme is required as a condition of employment. The successful candidate will require to become a member of this scheme prior to commencing employment with HISA. HISA will organise your PVG check for you as part of the onboarding process.

HISA is committed to ensuring that our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible, communicating and promoting all vacancies and offering an interview to applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for the post. For more information on the Disability Confident scheme, please visit their website.