

University of the Highlands and Islands Student Mental Health Agreement 2024–2026

Introduction and our commitment

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all UHI students and ensuring students have access to appropriate support.

The university is a tertiary institution encompassing 10 partner colleges and research centres, spread across the Highlands and Islands, Perth and Kinross, Moray and Argyll. The actions within this agreement are designed to take account of the geographical and resource variations within this complex and unique partnership. Actions within this agreement also take into consideration the fact that a lot of UHI students learn entirely online or in remote locations, thus facing challenges such as social isolation and lack of access or knowledge of support services.

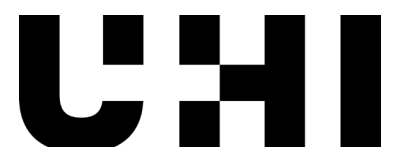
This agreement has been developed via a collaboration between the Students' Association Executive and Management Team and the University's Mental Health and Counselling Team, together with feedback from students across the partnership.

This Student Mental Health Agreement is a demonstration of UHI and HISA's commitment. It outlines key actions that will be taken together to ensure all students are safe, supported and enabled to achieve success during their time with us.

What is available at UHI for mental health and wellbeing?

Click each link to be taken to the resource webpage.

- [HISA Advice Service – Student Mental Health Support](#)
- [UHI tools – Support for your wellbeing and mental health](#)
- [Think Positive](#)
- [Spectrum.Life – 24/7 Live chat and phonenumber](#)
- [SeeMe Scotland – End Mental Health Discrimination](#)
- [Student Minds](#)



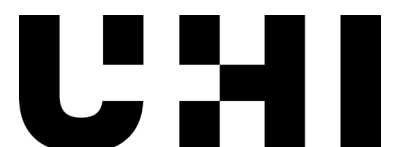
Our aims and outcomes

1. Students have awareness of the services available to support them

Both UHI and HISA offer and promote mental health and wellbeing services to students throughout the year. This is part of our ongoing commitment to raising awareness to our staff and students about how to maintain positive mental health and the support mechanisms on offer, together with developing an understanding of poor mental health. The services on offer to students include:

- UHI's Mental Health support, which is placed on the UHI web pages and shared through social media: [Staying Healthy - Student Mental Health Support \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://uhi.ac.uk) and the Digital Den: [Student Wellbeing - Digital Den \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://uhi.ac.uk)
- UHI's Online Counselling service which will be widely promoted to all UHI students via MyDay/UHI website, via social media and Students' Association newsletter: [Support - UHI, Staying Healthy - Student Mental Health Support \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://uhi.ac.uk) and [Spectrum.Life](https://spectrum.life)
- The Staying Alive app [Stay Alive App - Grassroots Suicide Prevention \(prevent-suicide.org.uk\)](https://prevent-suicide.org.uk), Mikey's Line [Home - Mikeysline](https://home-mikeysline.com) and Blue Ice, together with other local suicide prevention support organisations.
- Many UHI/HISA locations have a student quiet room for students to use to reflect and as a place of calm in busy lives.
- UHI and HISA will continue to promote positive mental health and wellbeing to students together with raising awareness of wider initiatives and campaigns across the Partnership on social media and websites, and will collaborate on events and campaigns throughout the year such as:
 - Black Maternal Mental Health Week
 - Menopause Awareness Month
 - World Mental Health Day
 - World Menopause Awareness Day
 - National Stress Awareness Day
 - Survivors of Suicide Loss Day
 - 16 Days of Activism against violence against women and girls
 - White Ribbon day
 - National Day of Listening
 - National Grief Awareness Week
 - Pride events

Both parties are actively involved in the NUS' Think Positive Student Mental Health Agreement plans to make improvements in how UHI and HISA can work together to tackle the stigma attached to mental health. This will include top tips in student newsletters on how to manage and relieve stress and top tips for studying and assessments and how to access quiet spaces on campuses.



- Our aim is to: i) cover both strategic and practical plans to make improvements in how the institution and students' associations work together ii) to tackle the stigma attached to mental health and iii) work towards improving the mental wellbeing of their student body.
- We will collaborate on funding applications for funding to deliver training to support the mental health of student leadership teams within the Student's Association and the wider student body, with a focus on personal resilience and suicide awareness.

We know we will have been successful when:

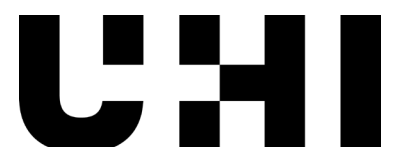
- There is an increased number of students using support services and undertaking training. We will demonstrate this through the uptake of the services and training and student awareness of the services on offer.
- We provided information and resources for World Mental Health Day and World Mental Health Awareness Week, the 16 Days of Activism and Pride.
- An increase in the number of students using Quiet Rooms.
- An increase in the number of staff trained as Mental Health First Aid Champions.
- Via a survey of students at the end of each year.

2. A commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and a sense of belonging

All UHI and HISA spaces are open to all students regardless of their background or beliefs. Our buildings and online spaces are a safe space, where you will be accepted for who you are, where you can find your 'tribe' and a sense of belonging and here you will be encouraged and supported to succeed. We have a commitment to promote awareness around mental health conditions, a commitment to inclusion and safety on our campuses and in our online spaces.

UHI and HISA both have equality, diversity and inclusion committees which meet regularly to drive forward services for students and are committed to joint promotion and communication of mental health topics. UHI is aware of the importance of ensuring that students are safe during their time at university and has created its own Safeguarding Group to bring leads together to develop policy, guidance and training. The UHI Safeguarding Group has a standing item on Gender Based Violence and now contains representation of key staff from across Colleges. This group will continue to ensure the appropriate processes and support are in place for those who experience gender-based violence. The Students' Association has its own independent Advice Service which can also advise in this space.

A commitment to inclusion is demonstrated via the Students' Associations Pride, Students of Colour, Neurodiversity, Accessibility and Women's Networks: hisa.uhi.ac.uk and in the delivery of disability sport via its Boccia teams. UHI and the Students' Association have also collaborated on obtaining the Rainbow Mark [Scottish LGBTI+ Rainbow Mark - Equality Network \(equality-network.org\)](https://scottishlgbtiplusrainbowmark-equalitynetwork.org) for the majority of UHI spaces.



The Accessibility Network works together with UHI to provide food larders and free breakfasts across most of its campuses to enable students to feed themselves and therefore study to the best of their ability. UHI also provides finance advice and support to students. There are other local initiatives such as the yellow line in UHI Inverness which shows visually impaired students the way from the lift to the canteen for the free breakfasts or the placing of flyers and stickers in toilets to promote GBV support networks and support lines.

Actions to be taken:

HISA will promote its networks, clubs and societies with the aim of growing their number and reach to provide students with a safe space

- HISA will promote sporting activities via Students Association clubs and societies to improve mental and physical health
- HISA will put on at least 10 events each year for students to enable them to relax and connect
- Both parties will actively promote HISA's independent and impartial Advice Service to students
- Both parties will join forces to run a major campaign against Gender Based Violence (GBV) each year via support for the White Ribbon campaign and marches against GBV
- Staff training – staff will be given appropriate training to ensure they can support students who are feeling suicidal, Mental Health First Aid Training, or support for students who have experienced incidents of sexual assault or gender-based violence.
- Policies and guidance – the university and the Students' Association have separately developed student policies and guidance around the behaviour they expect of students during their studies and as part of clubs and societies, and the actions which will be taken should their conduct not meet the standards laid out in the policies and guidance around acceptable behaviours. This will be promoted to students throughout the academic year.

We will know we have been successful when:

- Our HISA student networks have doubled in size in terms of membership numbers
- We have provided information and resources and promoted Pride and White Ribbon Week.
- We have delivered at least 10 events each year to students to promote mental wellbeing such as Easter egg hunts, ceilidhs and therapets.
- We have trained more staff on Mental Health Awareness.



3. Focus on combating student social isolation

We know that many UHI students study in remote or isolated communities and it is essential to promote online support to improve their sense of community and wellbeing. HISA and UHI will work together to create online communities for you to join, or ways of meeting online beyond individual modules, starting with the HISA Digital students network: [Digital Students Network \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/digital-students-network)

Actions to be taken:

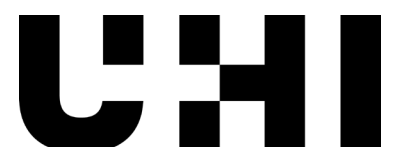
- HISA to promote and deliver Online Freshers events for networked students to encourage connections
- HISA to promote the use of online discussion boards by lecturers in Brightspace to link students with each other whilst studying
- HISA to promote all student services and online clubs and activities available to students via official social media channels, especially the student network for networked study to encourage connections to be made across the UHI partnership for students studying online
- HISA to run online activities for students throughout the academic year, both on a regional and local basis and to promote and support online clubs and run online events
- HISA to continue to campaign on Cost-of-Living issues as many mental health issues raised by students are related to lack of funds, food, accommodation and transport

We will know when we have been successful when:

- Numbers of students engaged in clubs and societies increases from 700 to 1,000 between 2023/24 and 2025/26.
- Students report a positive impact on their wellbeing through engagement in clubs and societies.
- An increase in students connecting online, outside of their direct study.

4. Measuring Outcomes

The UHI Mental Health and Counselling Manager will continue to take responsibility for an overarching implementation plan that will focus on university-wide activities as part of the UHI Mental Health Strategy. This agreement will be communicated to relevant Academic Partner Student Services staff, with support from the Mental Health and Counselling Manager, and then local action plans developed to fulfil our strategic aims through a joined-up, strategic approach.



Separately the Students' Association will measure its impact through engagement with networks and its advice service.

Sources of data beyond those outlined above will include:

- Implementing a new recording system in HISA for student contact so we can start to categorise the types of support that students ask us for
- HISA Advice Service quarterly reports
- Red and Green button summaries of issues raised by students
- Spectrum Life reports on trends of issues raised by students
- UHI stats on take up of mental health support
- Lower drop-out rates/higher completion rates
- Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey results

This Student Mental Health Agreement for UHI has been updated by a working group consisting of Liz Keegan, Inverness President, William Campbell, HISA President, Rachel Burn, HISA CEO, Allie Scott, UHI's Mental Health and Counselling Manager and Lorna Ferguson, UHI's Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator. This update is also linked to Liz's election campaign, where she emphasizes renewing the focus on student mental health.

Refreshed and Signed by: -

UHI Mental Health and Counselling Team

Elizabeth Keegan, Inverness President, Policy Writer for the HISA Student Mental Health Policy

William Campbell, HISA President

Shannon MacCallum, HISA Vice President Education

