

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

Dear Principal and Chair

**Lack of meaningful consultation and collaboration on UHI's transformation strategy**

We are writing to notify you of our concerns around lack of meaningful consultation and collaboration as the UHI's proposals for transformation continue.

Officials from the EIS, UCU, UNISON, GMB, and Unite have been invited to attend collective engagement meetings with Max Brown, Michael Boylan, Joe Wright and Lorna Walker since February 2025. There have been several meetings to date, but the sister unions' position is that there has been no meaningful consultation at these meetings. For clarification, meaningful consultation allows trade unions to have input into the processes and procedures informing decision-making, *prior* to decisions being made i.e. having the ability to influence decisions. The final decision on the Full Business Case (FBC) rests between partner College Boards, UHI Court, the SFC and ultimately the Scottish Parliament. The public will be consulted on it, and we understand trade unions will be formally consulted on it at some point between the end of December and beginning of March. However, we believe this is not meaningful as the influencing of the FBC (how it is written, what it includes, how it is framed, any gateway decisions etc) will be complete by then and it will be difficult to influence or shape thereafter which means meaningful consultation has been lost.

The right to meaningful consultation (including sharing relevant information timeously) comes from section 181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004, and local recognition agreements. Furthermore, as UHI is acting as a regional strategic body in this process, there has been failure to ensure consultation and, specifically, collaboration with trade unions in terms of section 23M of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005.

For the avoidance of doubt, we have raised this at every national engagement forum to date. There has been discussion about how and when to have meaningful consultation, but nothing forthcoming in terms of timeline, remit, or collaboration in the influencing of the FBC. Recently, we have been given several documents and presentations but with little time to engage with these. We see this as a dilatory tactic whilst the substance of the proposals remains withheld, curated or filtered. We are simply told that "all points of contention or objections (will) be discussed and actioned or noted as we move through this process." That is not what sister unions' have found to be the case so far.

Whilst it was agreed in July 2025 that trade union members would be invited to participate in workstreams (academic affairs, constitutional, cultural integration and

organisational change) and two reps would sit on the Transition Oversight Board, members were not invited to attend until October. The general report from the members on these workstreams is that the purpose is not always clear, it's too little too late, or they have not received remission time and with meetings moved at short notice they either cannot attend (three members have never attended due to this) or must reschedule their classes at short notice.

Trade unions have been promised a chance at the collective engagement meetings to interrogate financial baselines, engage with the headlines from the 50-page digital transformation strategy, service delivery model, academic delivery model, governance structure, leadership structure, and estates presentation. However, we have not yet seen the latter three documents and the chance for consultation, collaboration or even what we are being engaged upon on the others is not clear. The FBC is due to go to UHI Court imminently and our main concerns – the creation of a single tertiary institution, possible removal of staff from national bargaining, less FE provision, pensions issues, lack of transparent governance and how this proposal rectifies any financial unsustainability, have not been adequately addressed.

As such, our requests for the ongoing UHI transformation proposals are as follows:

- Adequate facility (including remission) time for TU reps on workstreams and transition oversight board for attendance at meetings and for engaging with the subject material (reading documents, ensuring up to date information available), and consulting with members;
- Appropriate representation on the Equality Impact and Island Community Impact Assessment groups from constituent members and TU reps;
- A clear timeline and scope for meaningful TU consultation on the proposals (including ability to influence final decision); and
- A clear timeline and scope for collaboration on the proposals which includes a trade union vision forum on the future of UHI.

In the meantime, sister unions are considering our options in terms of upholding the fundamental rights of trade union members across UHI and partner colleges.

Kind regards

**EIS-FELA, UCU Scotland, UNISON Scotland, GMB Scotland and Unite Scotland**