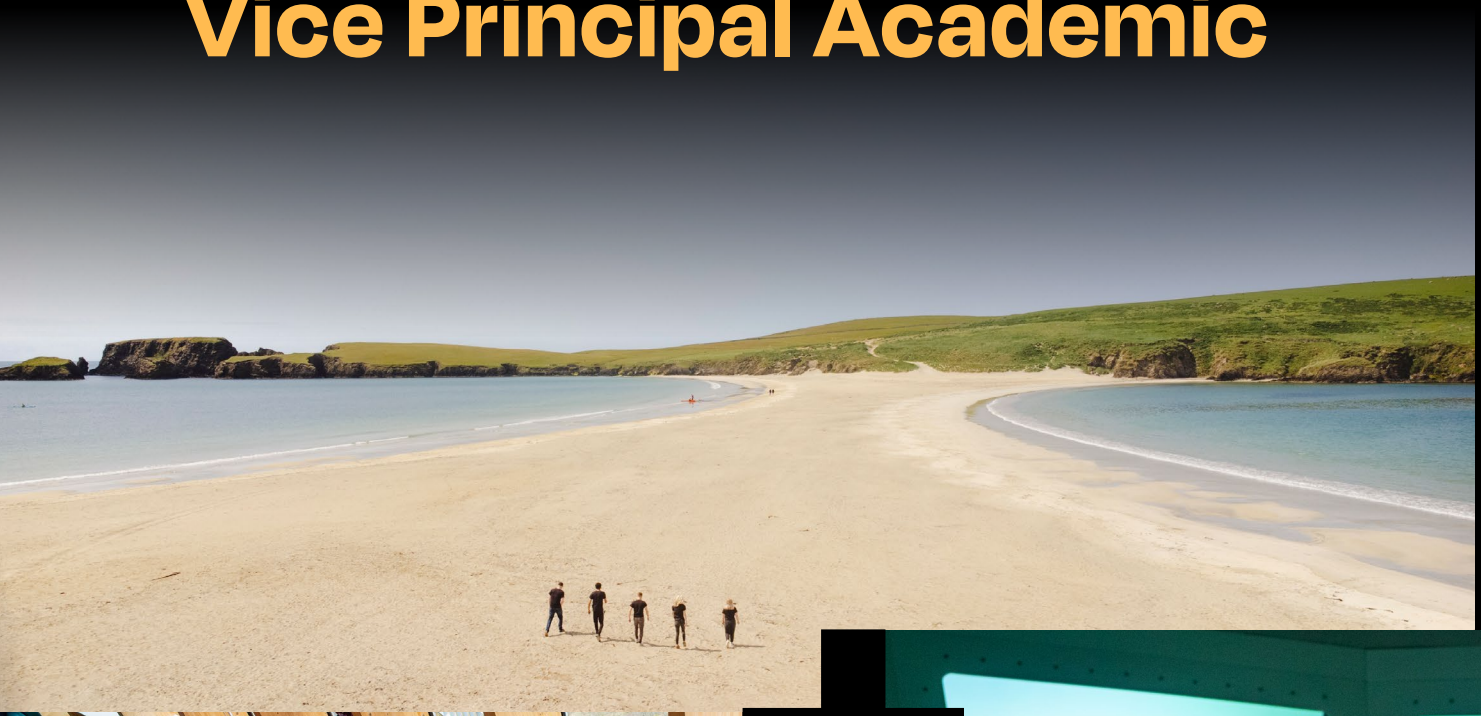
UHI | SHETLAND

Appointment of

Vice Principal Academic



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Shetland Isles

Shetland offers a distinctive and high quality living and working environment, combining a unique natural setting with strong, well connected communities. Located to the north of mainland Scotland, the islands are characterised by open landscapes, coastal scenery and a clear sense of place that supports wellbeing and work–life balance.

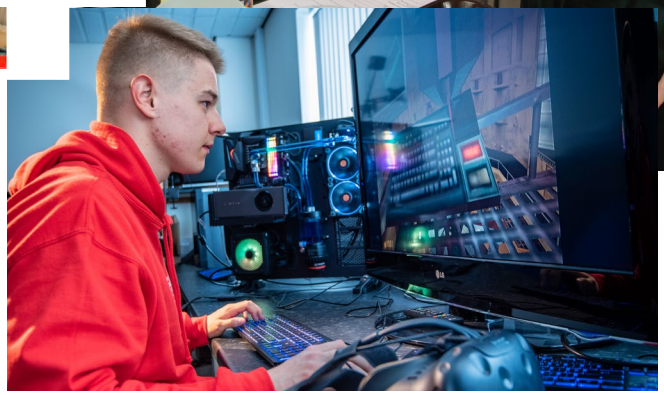
Shetland is well connected by both air and sea. Regular flights provide direct links to mainland Scotland, while ferry services support passenger, vehicle and freight travel. As with all island communities, weather conditions can occasionally affect travel, and flexibility is an inherent part of living and working in Shetland

With a strong cultural identity, supportive communities and a commitment to public services, Shetland offers a rewarding environment for professionals seeking both career development and quality of life.

UHI Shetland is the most northerly partner of UHI, providing a single point of contact for tertiary education, commercial training and research in Shetland. As a small rural college, UHI Shetland is committed to fostering a sustainable, collaborative environment where Shetland's economy and community thrive through accessible, high-quality learning, training, and research.

The opportunity

Vice-Principal Academic



At UHI Shetland, we are seeking an exceptional and forward-thinking academic leader to join our senior team as Vice Principal Academic. This is a rare opportunity to play a defining role in shaping the future of education, research and skills development within one of the UK's most distinctive further and higher education environments.

As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, you will lead the strategic direction of our academic provision, ensuring it is innovative, high quality and responsive to the needs of learners, employers and communities. You will provide leadership across curriculum development, academic quality, research, enterprise and knowledge exchange, helping to deliver an integrated portfolio that reflects local priorities while aligning with regional, national and international ambitions.

Working collaboratively with academic and professional colleagues, you will influence every stage of the learner journey, from widening access and supporting progression to enhancing achievement and delivering positive outcomes. You will champion excellence in teaching, learning and assessment, embedding a culture of continuous improvement, reflective practice and quality enhancement across the organisation.

This role also offers the opportunity to strengthen and expand our research, enterprise and knowledge exchange activity. You will foster a supportive and ambitious environment for staff and postgraduate learners, develop impactful partnerships, and drive innovation and collaboration that benefits both the institution and the wider community.

Beyond academic leadership, you will contribute to the strategic and corporate leadership of UHI Shetland, supporting institutional planning, leading organisational change and representing the institution at key external forums. Deputising for the Principal as required, you will bring resilience, sound judgement and the confidence to lead in a dynamic and evolving sector.

Set within the remarkable environment of Shetland, this role offers the chance to make a lasting impact in a community-focused institution with a strong sense of purpose. For an ambitious academic leader, it is an opportunity to shape strategy, inspire excellence and help define the future of education and innovation in an island setting.

Introduction from the Principal

Thank you for taking the time to consider the role of Vice Principal Academic at UHI Shetland.

This position offers a rare chance to undertake a pivotal leadership role in our diverse tertiary organisation, making a sustained and noticeable impact on education opportunities for our island community. Our Vice Principal Academic will play a key part in engaging and collaborating with local stakeholders and UHI partners for the benefit of learners across the region.

We look forward to welcoming our new Vice Principal into our small, friendly, and effective senior team. Working closely with our experienced and dedicated community of academic and professional staff, and our knowledgeable and committed Board of Management, your unique skills, experience and perspective will enhance the continued development of UHI Shetland, supporting delivery of high quality and responsive teaching, research and training for Shetland and beyond.

If you are an education leader who thrives in a varied, strategic role meeting opportunities and challenges with enthusiasm, collaboration, creative solutions and a passion for continuous improvement, I would encourage you to explore this opportunity further. I would be delighted to speak with you should you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, our college and our island community.

A key aim for UHI Shetland is to offer a wide range of learning opportunities that allow people to study without leaving Shetland; being responsive to the needs of our community and its economy. Engaging with the local community is extremely important to UHI Shetland. As the only tertiary education provider on the islands, we play a vital role in meeting local needs and supporting lifelong learning.

Laura Burden
Principal and CEO of UHI Shetland

Our strengths lie in our skilled workforce, excellent facilities, and connections with industry and community.

Teaching sections maintain strong partnerships across health and care, technology, maritime and built environment, creative industries, and apprenticeships; ensuring education aligns with local economic priorities. We offer a wide range of marine consultancy services, and enjoy a vibrant research area, particularly in fisheries, marine planning and creative industries.

Laura Burden
Principal and CEO of UHI Shetland

Success at UHI Shetland

Although UHI Shetland is a relatively small institution, our influence reaches far beyond our size.

In November 2025, we earned national recognition by winning the Gold Award for School or College Partnership Programme of the Year at the prestigious Pearson National Teaching Awards.

Furthermore, in the last academic year we led the way in Scotland for student attainment, achieving an impressive **82.8%**, a remarkable **15.7%** higher than the Scottish average of **67.1%**.

Next steps at UHI Shetland

UHI Shetland is on an ambitious journey to transform the way it delivers education and training for the people of Shetland. Over the coming years, the college is investing in a programme of significant improvements to its estate that will bring all learning and training onto a single, unified campus at Scalloway, creating a modern, sustainable and inspiring environment where every student can thrive.

This transformation is being delivered through two complementary investment programmes: the Future Single Campus Project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council; and the Islands Growth Deal Campus Redevelopment Programme, funded through the UK and Scottish Governments' Islands Growth Deal. Together, these programmes represent a once-in-a-generation investment in the future of further and higher education in Shetland.

As an academic partner of the UHI, we are engaging with the current UHI Transformation project. The university and partner principals have committed to creating a more integrated and unified organisation. This strategic evolution will strengthen our ability to meet the needs of students, staff and other key stakeholders while deepening our contributions to regional development.

UHI | SHETLAND

Our Mission

To support a sustainable and collaborative environment in Shetland where the economy and community can prosper with local access to relevant, high-quality learning, training and research opportunities

Our Vision

UHI Shetland will be an inspirational hub of innovation and learning designed to meet the needs of the people of Shetland, nationally and internationally

Our Values

Collaboration

- We will proactively engage and co-operate with others.
- We will communicate effectively to share knowledge with others.
- We will work constructively with others to achieve a common purpose.

Openness

- We will embrace feedback and continue to learn.
- We will be empathetic, authentic and honest in all our interactions.
- We will listen to others, encourage them to share their views and will value their contributions.

Respect

- We will recognise other's strengths and abilities, and their contributions to the organisation.
- We will respect and appropriately utilise facilities and resources that are made available to us.
- We will consider the impact of our words and actions on others.

Excellence

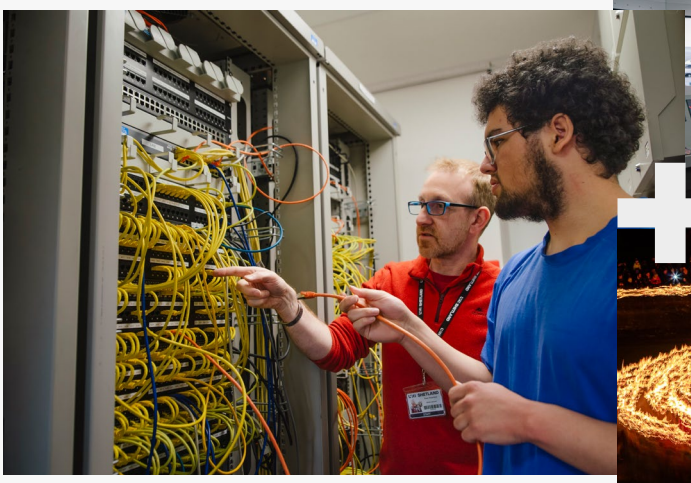
- We will take responsibility for our contribution to the success of UHI Shetland.
- We will take pride in our work and work to the highest possible standard.
- We will celebrate the achievements of the UHI Shetland community.

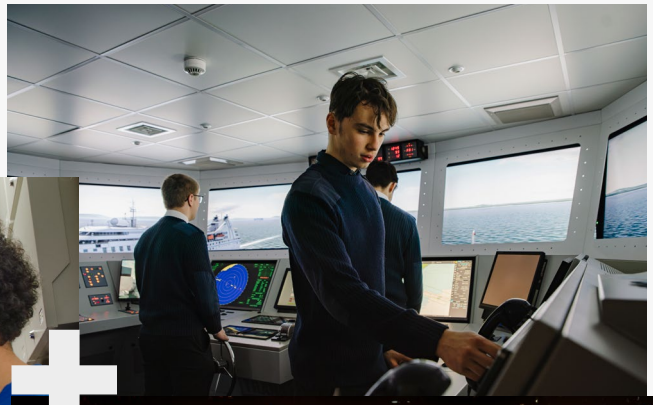
The role

As a key member of the Senior Leadership Team at UHI Shetland, this role provides strategic leadership across the College's curriculum, academic quality, research, enterprise, knowledge exchange, and impact functions. The postholder will ensure these areas are effectively aligned with institutional objectives and responsive to local, regional, national, and international priorities.

The role is responsible for leading the development and delivery of academic strategy, ensuring the quality, coherence, and continuous enhancement of all Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) provision. In addition, the postholder will drive the growth of a strong and sustainable research, enterprise, and innovation culture across the organisation.

As Vice Principal Academic, you will engage proactively with all our stakeholders, at a transformational time for UHI and UHI Shetland. You will be a highly motivated and experienced senior leader, who is keen to build strategic relationships as well as have a can-do attitude that will deliver change, and results, for UHI Shetland.





The role

Key duties and responsibilities

Academic Strategy and Curriculum Leadership

+ Providing strategic leadership for curriculum development across FE and HE provision
+ Ensuring curriculum design is responsive to community need, employer engagement and labour market intelligence
+ Leading curriculum review, development and enhancement processes across all academic areas
+ Ensuring clear progression pathways, including articulation and widening access routes
+ Overseeing short course, CPD and flexible learning provision
+ Driving alignment of curriculum with local, regional and national priorities
+ Identifying and developing areas of academic strength and specialism
+ Ensuring engagement with UHI partnership curriculum development activity

Quality Assurance and Academic Enhancement

+ Providing strategic leadership for Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement frameworks, leading on all aspects of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework for UHI Shetland
+ Ensuring alignment of teaching, learning and assessment with institutional strategy
+ Leading self-evaluation, academic review and continuous improvement processes
+ Ensuring compliance with quality and awarding body requirements
+ Monitoring and reporting on key performance indicators including retention, attainment and progression
+ Embedding a culture of quality enhancement and reflective practice across the organisation

Research, Enterprise, Knowledge Exchange and Impact

+ Providing strategic leadership for research, enterprise and knowledge exchange activity
+ Supporting continued development of a supportive research environment for staff and postgraduate learners
+ Supporting growth in PhD activity and postgraduate provision where appropriate
+ Stimulating research activity leading to demonstrable impact and external engagement
+ Supporting the development of enterprise activity and income-generating opportunities
+ Promoting collaboration with industry, community partners and external stakeholders
+ Supporting staff development in research, innovation and enterprise engagement
+ Monitoring and reporting on research, enterprise and impact activities in collaboration with research leads

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Contribution

+ Contributing as a member of the Senior Leadership Team to overall College strategy
+ Supporting development and delivery of strategic and operational plans
+ Providing leadership across academic functions in line with institutional priorities
+ Leading and supporting staff through change and improvement initiatives
+ Exercising delegated responsibility for academic budgets where appropriate
+ Representing UHI Shetland at local, regional and national forums as required
+ Ensuring academic planning and delivery aligns with institutional strategy

Deputising and additional duties as required

+ Deputising for the Principal as required
+ Undertaking such other duties as may reasonably be required by the Principal, commensurate with the seniority of the post

Person specifications

Qualifications

Essential

+ Professional leadership qualification
+ SCQF Level 9 qualification or above

Desirable

+ Teaching qualification or equivalent

Experience

Essential

+ Experience of working in close harmony within a small senior leadership team demonstrating a collaborative, inclusive and values driven approach
+ Experience of leading and managing academic or research staff, including performance management.
+ Experience in academic and research delivery, with a track record of seeking and securing opportunities that enhance reputation and commercial success.
+ Experience of contributing to the development of academic strategy within a teaching and research environment.
+ Experience at identifying and building strategic partnerships with internal and external stakeholders.
+ Experience of embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations into organisational strategy.
+ Experience of external engagement and collaboration, for example, in developing collaborative research projects, or sector wide initiatives.

Desirable

+ Senior academic leadership experience with effective resource and management skills appropriate to leading within a tertiary institution.

Collaborative, successful and diverse experience of academic leadership across all domains including further and higher education, curriculum design and leadership, and research and knowledge exchange.

Skills and knowledge

+ Knowledge of strategic, policy and financial issues affecting further education, higher education, knowledge exchange and research in Scotland, and the wider UK.
+ An in-depth knowledge/strong understanding of curriculum design and quality assurance frameworks.
+ Knowledge of research and enterprise development in education.

Professional qualities

+ An excellent communicator and influencer, who leads by example, inspiring trust and confidence at all levels of interaction.
+ Flexible with the ability to lead and work effectively in a team, fostering collaborative and effective engagement.
+ Challenge and propose innovative solutions.
+ Self-assured and resilient, able to handle conflict and lead difficult conversations with resourcefulness and diplomacy to achieve end results.
+ Collaborative approach enabling colleagues to contribute and promoting a culture of accountability and empowerment.
+ The ability to engage and support organisational development initiatives aligned with UHI Shetland's culture and values, including management of change, employee engagement and wellbeing, talent management and leadership development capability.

Summary of contract / terms and conditions

Salary

Salary for the role is £64,367.08 - £68,621.52, APT55 - APT58 and is reviewed annually. Distant Islands Allowance is also payable for staff members based in Shetland – currently £2,997 per annum,

Contract

The role is a permanent, full-time opportunity.

The role is based in Shetland.

The first six months of the appointment shall be a probationary period.

Annual leave

Our holiday year runs from 1 September to 31 August.

Holiday entitlement is 45 days paid annual leave in each holiday year, which includes 10 days office closure over Christmas and New Year.

Pension

You are eligible to be enrolled in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Further details will be provided on request.

PVG

Preferred candidates will be required to join the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme or undergo a PVG Scheme update with a successful outcome prior to appointment.

How to apply

To apply please complete the application form and return to:

recruitment.shetland@uhi.ac.uk

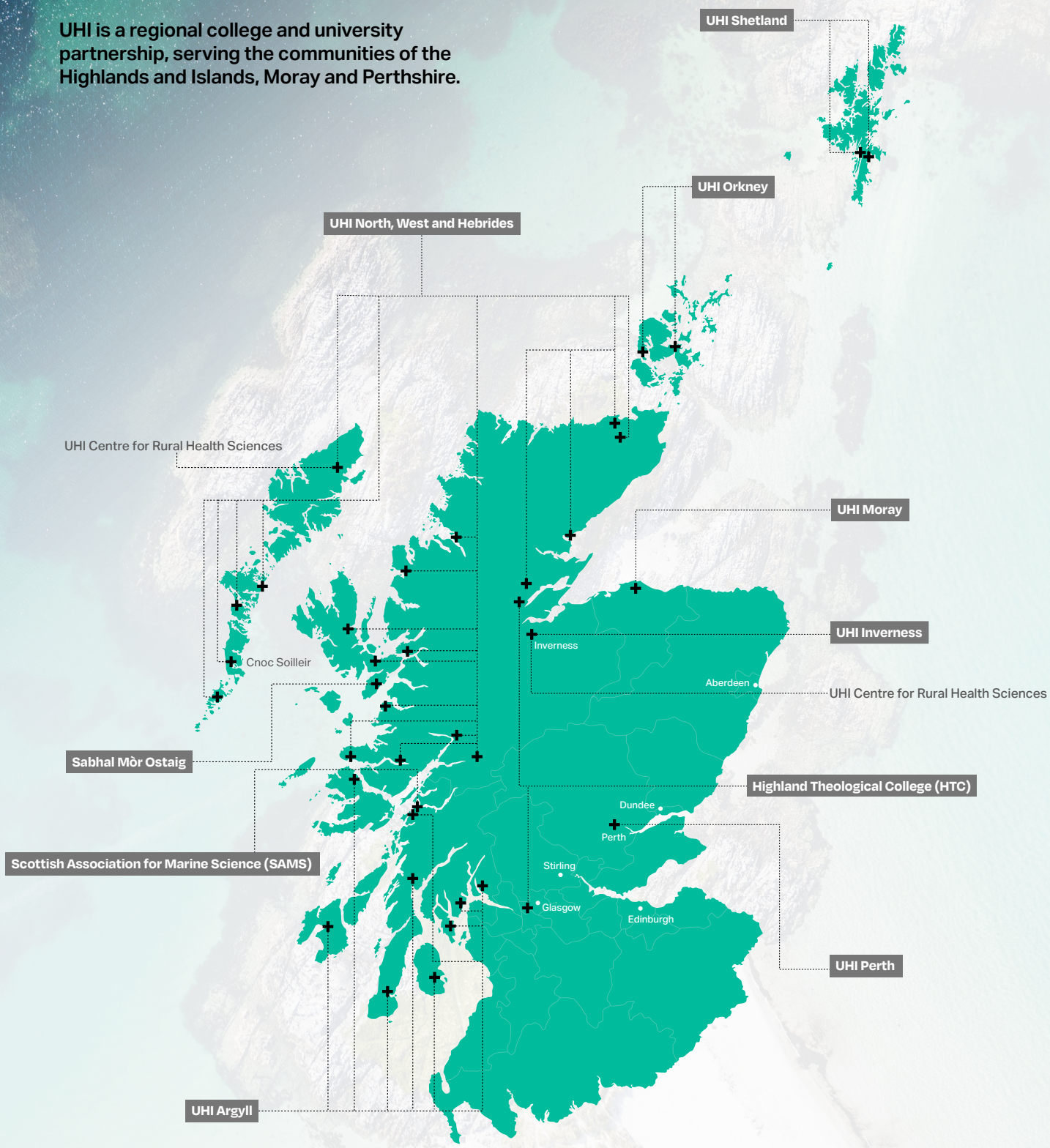
Please note that CVs will not be accepted.

If you would like the opportunity for an informal discussion about any aspect of the role please contact us by email at **recruitment.shetland@uhi.ac.uk**

Closing date for applications: **4th July 2026**

UHI Shetland is an accredited Living Wage employer and also Disability Confident committed.

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



Our distinctive partnership of independent colleges and research institutions is locally based and rooted in communities, but with national and international reach, as part of a regional university structure.

- **UHI is a tertiary institution, the only one in Scotland and one of only a few in Europe, encompassing both further and higher education.**
- **We offer flexible and supported learning from access level to PhD, upskilling and cross skilling.**
- **10 partners across the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire.**
- **We are proud of our unique place and connections with our communities and industry which makes our teaching and research more connected to their needs.**

UHI exists to have a transformational impact on the people, communities and economy of our regions.

UHI historic timeline

1653
Sir Thomas Urquhart proposes a university in Cromarty.

1991
The Highland Regional Council formal steering group led by Val MacIver examines the case for a university in the Highlands and Islands.

1992
Sir Graham Hills report confirms scope for a university to be formed via existing further education colleges.

1993
UHI Limited is incorporated and University of the Highlands and Islands Project office is created by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

1995
Patrick Dark officially takes up employment as the first member of staff.

1997
UHI Limited signs academic partnership agreement with the Open University. Scottish Office pledges £3.6m to the project.

2001
UHI Millennium Institute is officially created as a Higher Education institute.

2008
Taught degree awarding powers to UHI Millennium Institute.

2011
University of the Highlands and Islands is established following the award of university title. HRH The Princess Royal appointed as first Chancellor.

2013
Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act designates UHI as regional strategic body for further education.

2017
Research degree awarding powers granted to UHI.

2020
UHI contributes £560m to regional economy, supporting 6,200 jobs.

Our founding principles

Educational opportunities for all

The lack of educational offering, for those who wished to remain in the region and improve their prospects, was forcing locals to leave the region – leading to a significant and unsustainable loss of talent.

Driving economic growth

The UHI concept was formed primarily to be a catalyst of economic development. If the region was to prosper, it would need to find its own way to modernise, generate new knowledge and support businesses to grow.

Co-created education and research

Curriculum and research were to be designed to link to the region's unique landscape, heritage and culture. To serve the economy and ensure a pipeline of talent, business needs were to be at the core of curriculum and research development.

Delivering social change

UHI was to deliver social change, supporting communities to flourish, by harnessing local knowledge, and working globally with our diaspora to build better futures for those in our region.

Our plans for tomorrow

UHI is a globally recognised tertiary institution and we are proud to celebrate our exceptional partnership of colleges, internationally recognised research institutions and specialist teaching centres. UHI is more than a traditional university and we pride ourselves on delivering further and higher education and world-class research to students across our campuses and learning centres in the Highland and Islands, Moray and Perthshire alongside a thriving online community.

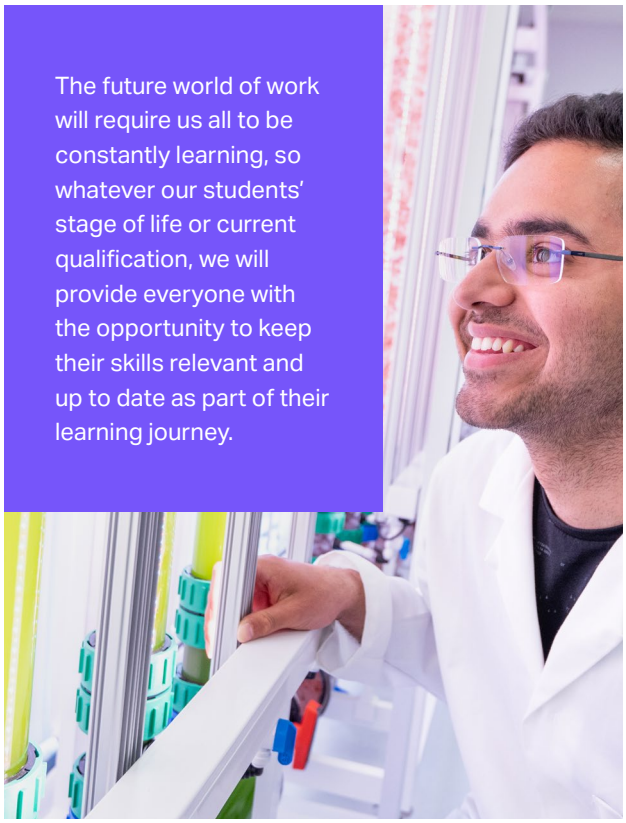
Our philosophy is based on our founding values of creating sustainable education for students of all ages and abilities. This ethos is underpinned by our mission to have a transformational impact on our people, communities and economy. We care passionately about our regions, and we demonstrate our commitment 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.

The 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 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.

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.

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.



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 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 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.

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 (SAMS)

Where learning means more

UHI Shetland, Gremista, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0PX

Limited company registered in Scotland No. SC646337. Registered Scottish Charity No. SC050701.

UHI House, Old Perth Road, Inverness, Scotland IV2 3JH

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