

# **ORKNEY COLLEGE UHI**

**Strategic Plan  
2018 to 2021**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Orkney College UHI is a small, but vibrant, college operating in an island community (population circa 21,500), which is both rural and predominantly agricultural. As an island community, the population of Orkney is reliant upon the College to provide a wide range of educational opportunities full-time/part-time, further education/higher education. The curriculum offered is solidly based on the needs and strengths of the community. The College provides a wide range of courses, which are in demand within the community, including a range of short courses for businesses and longer-term vocational training for employees.
- 1.2 The College is one of very few in Scotland that are not incorporated, with responsibility for Further Education being vested in Orkney Islands Council. The College Management Council has continued to discuss the status of the College but has concluded, because the College serves a specialised local community and has good relationships both with the business community and Orkney Islands Council, that there is no real advantage in a change of status. A major change for the College has been the creation of the Highlands and Islands Regional College with Orkney College being assigned to the University of the Highlands and Islands with all of the Further and Higher Education funding now coming through UHI. This has not changed the legal status of the College but has seen the introduction of a Further Education Regional Board to which the College is additionally accountable.
- 1.3 A challenge for Orkney College UHI is the limited population living within daily travelling distance of the College. The College has to identify innovative ways of delivering cost effective courses to small class sizes and provide suitable progression opportunities. An important development over the next three years will be closer working with the other colleges in the Highlands and Islands to explore what provision can be shared between partners and what new provision can be offered by more strategic collaborative working.
- 1.4 The University has created a Strategic Vision and Plan for 2015-2020. For the first time this plan embraces the entire tertiary nature of the Partnership, covering further education, higher education and research. All of the academic partners of UHI are committed to the delivery of this vision and plan and consequently this draft plan incorporates the strategic themes for the University as a whole. The vast majority of the strategic priorities locally and the corresponding objectives are consistent with these themes, however the Orkney College plan (2018-2021) does highlight the specific issues to be addressed locally.

## 2. Strategic Vision

- 2.1 Orkney College UHI is an academic partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands, the United Kingdom's leading integrated university, encompassing further and higher education.
- 2.2 We will be recognised for the quality of our students' experience and for their achievement.
- 2.3 Our local and worldwide reputation will be built upon our innovative approach to learning and our distinctive research and curriculum, enriched by the people, natural environment, economy, culture and heritage of our region and its communities.
- 2.4 We will be locally based, regional in structure and have national and international reach.

## 3. Mission Statement

- 3.1 The UHI Mission is to have a transformational impact on the prospects of our region, its economy, its people and its communities.
- 3.2 Locally this is embraced within the College's mission statement of: -

### **Orkney College UHI – Realising your Potential**

The mission statement reflects the College's commitment to providing the educational support to help people to achieve their potential.

## 4. University wide Strategic Themes

The following is an extract from the University of the Highlands and Islands Strategic Plan.

### 4.1 The University for All of Our Region

The university will act as a force for economic, social and cultural change across the region by connecting and collaborating with businesses, public and third sector partners and communities.

We will:

- 4.1.1 Be active partners in community planning within our region and contribute to reduced inequality, improved services, enhanced training and skills development and the promotion of sustainable economic growth.
- 4.1.2 Provide a professional and consistent approach to employer and community engagement that underpins the relevance of our curriculum and research.
- 4.1.3 Ensure our academic structures and work practices respond effectively to the development needs of communities and key economic sectors.
- 4.1.4 Work with schools within our region to raise ambition, achievement and progression to higher levels of post-school study.

### 4.2 Our Students

The university will continue to meet the needs of learners within the region, while targeting growth in our share of young entrants and students from beyond the region.

We will:

- 4.2.1 Ensure our further and higher education curriculum better meets current and future local and regional needs while also including elements of national and international relevance.
- 4.2.2 Use our expertise in blended delivery, supported by pedagogical research, to meet the learning, teaching and support needs and expectations of our diverse student body, studying in a wide variety of locations and contexts.
- 4.2.3 Pursue greater flexibility and responsiveness in our further and higher education curriculum design and delivery, so we can fully deliver and promote the tertiary basis of our offering to learners and the opportunities this presents for them.
- 4.2.4 Enhance connections between our curriculum and employers and the workplace.
- 4.2.5 Establish a culture of student engagement by working in partnership with students to ensure their voices drive improvement and change.
- 4.2.6 Recognise and respond to the diversity of our student population by creating opportunities where inclusive practice can be enhanced and mainstreamed.
- 4.2.7 Ensure all students have appropriate opportunities to network with other students and staff to ensure they feel connected to the university.

### 4.3 Focused Research

The university's research will be recognised internationally, nationally and regionally for its quality and for its contribution to our remit of transforming and enhancing lives, the environment and the economy.

We will:

- 4.3.1 Continue to develop research excellence performance in targeted areas.
- 4.3.2 Enhance the experience of research students.
- 4.3.3 Ensure effective public engagement and dissemination of research outputs.
- 4.3.4 Promote knowledge exchange as an integral part of our wider employer and community engagement plans.
- 4.3.5 Achieve sustainable funding for research and knowledge exchange activities.

## **5. Orkney College Local Strategic Priorities**

- 5.1 The strategic themes set out in section 4 embrace the whole of the University of the Highlands and Islands partnership. Further to these strategic themes there are a number of key priorities for the College over the coming three years. These can be summarised as follows: -.

### **Curriculum and Quality**

- 5.1.1 Orkney College will continue to offer, develop and grow a range of both further and higher education to meet local demand, delivered in and from the County, including being a lead deliverer of blended further education provision across UHI.
- 5.1.2 To ensure that the College should play a leading role, in partnership with the schools, in delivering the 'Orkney Offer' for all senior phase pupils in Orkney, including the introduction of relevant Foundation Apprenticeships as part of the Orkney response to 'Developing the Young Workforce.'
- 5.1.3 To respond to the needs identified in the Orkney Skills Investment Plan as an integral and integrated part of the Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan providing a steer to the work of the 'Developing the Young Workforce project.'
- 5.1.4 To ensure that Orkney continues to be the leading partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands in Archaeology, Agronomy and Northern Studies, encompassing teaching, research and associated commercial activities; to explore opportunities in new research areas such as Art.
- 5.1.5 To seek to identify innovative approaches to meeting small scale training needs in a financially sustainable way
- 5.1.6 To maintain and improve the quality of provision across further and higher education and strive to enable all students to achieve their full educational potential.
- 5.1.7 To encourage creativity in learning and teaching and keep it under regular review to maintain the drive for continuous improvement in the learner experience.
- 5.1.8 To work in partnership with North Highland and Shetland campuses, to promote links to deliver Engineering and Nautical services across the UHI partnership.

### **Student Support**

- 5.1.9 To continue to improve engagement of all students in the life of the College and University, working closely with the Highlands and Islands Student Association.
- 5.1.10 To prepare a business case for new student accommodation with a capital programme bid to meet the needs of both students moving to Orkney, for principally higher education courses and students from the outer isles needing accommodation in Kirkwall during the week for their studies at the College.

### **Governance**

- 5.1.11 To engage in a strategic review of the long term governance arrangements for Orkney College to reflect local, regional and national developments and priorities.
- 5.1.12 To engage proactively in discussions within UHI regarding the long term structure of the partnership.

- 5.1.13 To further develop the effectiveness of the College Management College Management Council in line with the outcomes of the externally validated self - evaluation undertaken in 2017-18.

### **Financial Sustainability**

- 5.1.14 To ensure that Orkney College has a secure and sustainable long term financial position, ensuring as a minimum that a balanced budget position is sustained.
- 5.1.15 To develop a strategic workforce development plan taking account of the implications of national bargaining, UHI organisational developments and other changes necessary to ensure a sustainable further and higher education provision in Orkney.
- 5.1.16 To optimise opportunities from a wide range of funding sources to support the work of the College.
- 5.1.17 To ensure that all business / research areas achieve at least break even funding positions against a historic background of rarely achieving this.
- 5.1.18 To respond proactively and appropriately to all internal and external audit reports on the work of the College