

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road with white dashed lines, curving through a dense forest of trees with autumn foliage in shades of brown, orange, and red. In the background, a large body of dark blue water, likely a loch or sea loch, stretches across the top half of the image. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down at the road and forest.

# UHI | INVERNESS

# Strategic Plan

2022-2026

Learn how UHI Inverness will have a transformational impact on the development and prospects of the Highlands and Islands region through the provision of excellence in education.

[inverness.uhi.ac.uk](https://inverness.uhi.ac.uk)



## OUR PURPOSE

As leaders in tertiary thinking and tertiary delivery, we will have a transformational impact on the development and prospects of the people, communities and economy of the Highlands and Islands.

We will design and deliver an innovative, integrated curriculum that spans all levels and types of qualifications, providing world-class education, training and research with local, national and international sustainable value.

## OUR VISION

As an ambitious, bold and creative tertiary institution, we will provide world class research-informed training and education.

We will provide an excellent experience, tailored to the needs of our students and communities.

Working closely with business, partners and stakeholders, we will support the sustainable and ethical development of the communities of the Highlands & Islands.



## VALUES

**Be Ambitious** - through teamwork and partnership we have a desire and determination to collectively succeed.

**Be Bold** - we have passion and courage to do what we say we will do and exceed expectations.

**Be Creative** - we use our collective expertise and imagination to create new things and continuously improve what we do.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

We will operate in an environment of mutual respect, behaving professionally at all times;

We will act with integrity, being honest and transparent in our work and putting the interests of our students first;

We will be accountable for our actions, do what we say we will do and exceed expectations;

We will be passionate in our work and in our ambition for our students, our college and our university.



# CONTENTS

A Warm Welcome	7
Context Statement	8-9
Tertiary Education	10
Organisational Development	11
Research & Innovation	12
Student Experience	13
Finance & Sustainability	14
Case Studies	16-20





**It's my pleasure to introduce the Strategic Plan for UHI Inverness for 2022/26 which outlines our aims and our commitment to supporting the continued economic development of our region.**

## **A WARM WELCOME**

Welcome to our Strategic Plan for UHI Inverness for 2022-2026. It will direct our bold ambitions to build on our success and deliver world-class education and training.

UHI Inverness is at the heart of our community as a partner of UHI, the region's main provider of skills and talent development. Our focus is to support our students to gain valuable qualifications and secure rewarding careers, and to play a key role in contributing to the continued prosperity of the Highlands.

We have created an inclusive and dynamic learning environment, and our proactive student support will continue to be at the forefront of our activities following the return to normal teaching in our campuses. As we move forward from the extraordinary experience of the past two years, the emphasis will be placed on creative, accessible teaching, engaging more with communities and becoming more enterprising in our activities. Our new identity and branding, introduced earlier this year, reflect that ambition.

We are moving forward with confidence towards the opportunities ahead. I hope you will enjoy reading our new plan.

**Mark Sheridan**  
Chair of the Board of Management  
UHI Inverness





# CONTEXT STATEMENT

UHI Inverness is one of the largest partners of UHI, a diverse and flexible tertiary partnership serving our communities and connecting to their needs. Our Strategic Plan for 2022-26 sets out our expectations of how we will develop during the next three years and how we intend to contribute to the realisation of UHI's strategic vision.



UHI Inverness provides education and training for over 6,000 students, including a high proportion of apprentices. We are a partner of the UHI which is the key provider of tertiary education in the region.

Our provision covers the entirety of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF), from access level 1 through to doctoral level study at level 12, and as an organisation we pride ourselves on our ability to tailor support to the needs of each student.

**Reconnecting relationships has become a focus in our lives, both internally within the UHI Inverness and externally as part of our role within our wider community.**

As we emerge from the restrictions of the pandemic, face challenges and embrace new opportunities; we know that building partnerships and collaboration will give opportunities to our students to make them the dynamic leaders the Highlands need and deserve.

Schools, industry, public and private sectors, community and charitable concerns, all contribute to our role as an embedded educational and training provider. UHI Inverness enhances the lives of many, and we recognise the significance of our stakeholders and their ambitions.

Our new visual identity strengthens the UHI partnership and our connections with our communities, demonstrating that anybody can access a wealth of talent, opportunity and support across, regardless of where they live in our vast geographic area.

UHI Inverness is working to support regional economic development creating a skills base that supports the development of existing businesses and attracts inward investment. As such, our strategy and planning is closely aligned to the Regional Skills Investment Plan and the ambitions of the people we represent.

We fulfil the national skills development needs of sectors and industries including Forestry, Engineering, Construction, Health and Social Care, Computing and Creative Industries.

**We continue to deliver for our communities, and our successes have been many and varied. Not only do we provide a comprehensive level of support to our students, from free food and warm clothing to IT equipment and books, but we have been recognised nationally as leaders.**

Recently, we became one of the first educational institutions in Scotland to sign up to the Emily Test, the Gender-Based Violence Charter, we were shortlisted at The Herald Higher Education Awards for our technology enhanced learning, and in partnership with UHI West and North Highland we won the CDN Digital Learning Award in recognition of our innovative learning and teaching.

We work with Highland Council and third sector organisations to provide bespoke support for care experienced young people to help them re-engage in learning and employment opportunities, whilst working in other sectors on projects as varied as securing the future of shinty sticks, research to protect Atlantic salmon, and the restoration of the elm tree population in Scotland.

Our ambition and determination to expand and achieve continues to receive recognition. A recent report by Education Scotland on our further education provision highlighted our best practice in leadership and quality culture, delivery of learning, teaching and assessment, and the delivery of services to support learning.

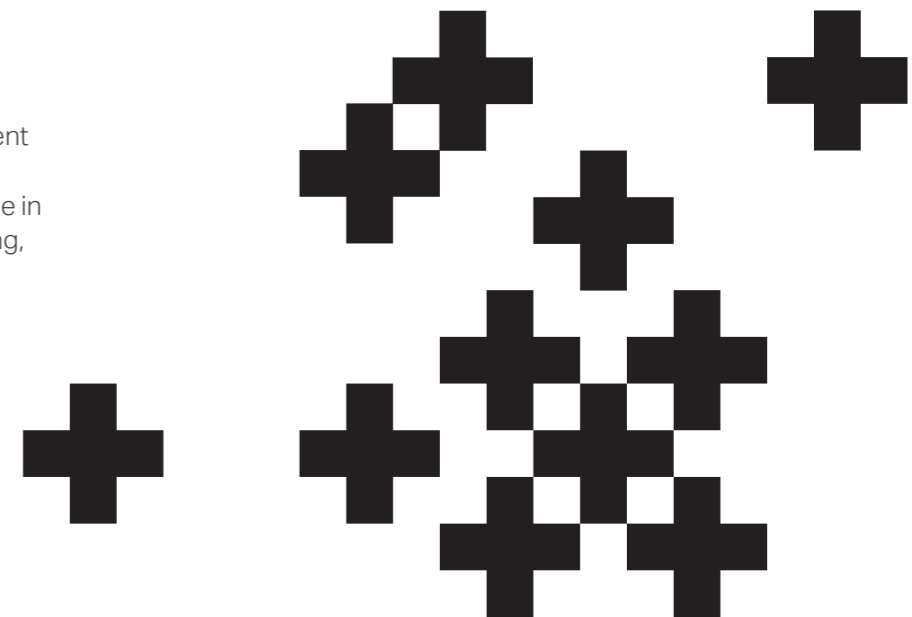
**Nearly three-quarters of UHI research was classified as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' by the Research Excellence Framework.**

Our most important connection is our relationship with our students, who embrace their learning with enthusiasm and dedication. In the National Student Survey satisfaction, we rank 4th in Scotland and we routinely have student satisfaction which is well ahead of the Scottish average.

As we evolve, we will retain the flexibility of blended learning, will work with stakeholders to ensure our courses are relevant and responsive to need, will create opportunities for our graduates and ensure our teaching is both current and applicable. We will continue to provide an environment for our students to support their development as well-rounded and responsible members of society.

Our graduates and our people are ambassadors for our brand. We are ambitious, bold, and creative.

**Professor Chris O'Neil  
Principal and Chief Executive  
UHI Inverness**





# Tertiary Education

## STRATEGIC AIM

To increase our reputation and reach by offering a progressive and accessible tertiary curriculum that is relevant and attractive to local, national and international students, and which enables personal development, economic growth and social cohesion.

## OBJECTIVES

- + To become a destination of choice for local, national and international students, supporting inclusive sustainable development and encouraging inward investment.
- + To engage with stakeholders to develop a tertiary curriculum which meets the emerging skills, employment and cultural needs of our communities.
- + To deliver a stimulating and innovative tertiary curriculum, informed by research, professional best practice and a recognition of our changing world.
- + To continually evolve our tertiary curriculum, to provide flexible opportunities for life-long learning.
- + To ensure that our tertiary curriculum equips every student with the attributes and skills, to support their success in learning, life and work.



# Organisational Development

## STRATEGIC AIM

We will attract and retain talented employees committed to achieving our shared goals. We will create a supportive, collaborative and dynamic environment where students and staff are inspired to learn and develop. Our high-performance culture will be underpinned by a distributed leadership model, which empowers teams to delivery and share accountability for outcomes. We will support our workforce to be agile, resilient and responsive to opportunities.

## OBJECTIVES

- + To develop and implement a Talent Management Strategy, which provides a workforce to meet our organisational needs now and into the future.
- + To ensure professional practice of all staff are aligned to sector standards, industry best practice and our values.
- + To ensure that our staff have opportunities to develop and maintain their knowledge and skills to the highest industry and professional standards and are equipped for an increasingly digital world.
- + To maintain and continue to develop our quality culture, supporting all our staff to take responsibility for delivering excellence.
- + To ensure we play a leading role in achieving net zero.





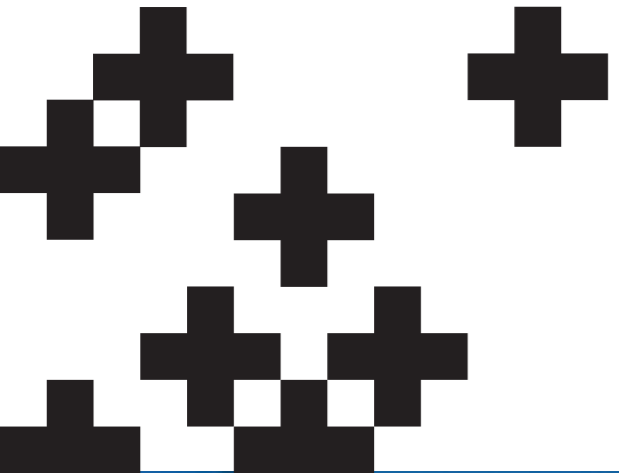
# Research & Innovation

## STRATEGIC AIM

Research and innovation will define the tertiary environment and have relevance to and impact upon our staff, students and the communities we serve.

## OBJECTIVES

- + To continue to grow of our centres of research, their excellence and transformational impact.
- + To maximise opportunities for innovation and knowledge exchange, ensuring that our research has relevance and a positive impact on our communities.
- + To provide an accessible, engaging and thriving research environment for our students and researcher community.
- + To provide opportunities and a supportive environment for our staff to develop their research and scholarship activity.



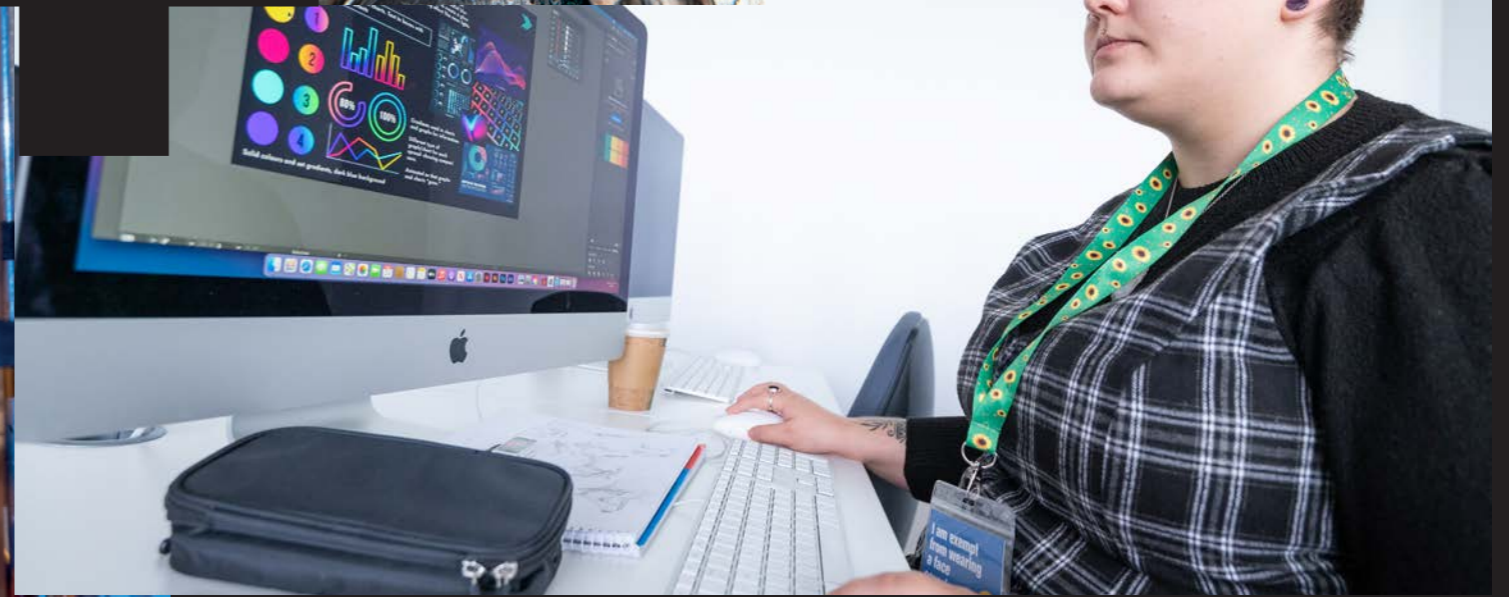
# Student Experience

## STRATEGIC AIM

We will create a vibrant student experience that is underpinned by creative learning and teaching and proactive student support, designed through collaboration between students, staff and the wider community. We will ensure that all our students are supported at every stage of their journey, to achieve their full potential.

## OBJECTIVES

- + To provide an excellent experience across every aspect of the student journey, maintaining high rates of student satisfaction and successful outcomes across all learner groups.
- + To develop a culture of collaboration and collective responsibility among staff and students across the work and life of the college.
- + To create opportunities for students to develop the range of skills and attributes they need to be successful in work and life.
- + To provide responsive, accessible and inclusive support for students to maximise participation, transition and progression.
- + To deliver excellent learning and teaching, which engages all students, across all modes of delivery, enhanced by digital technologies.





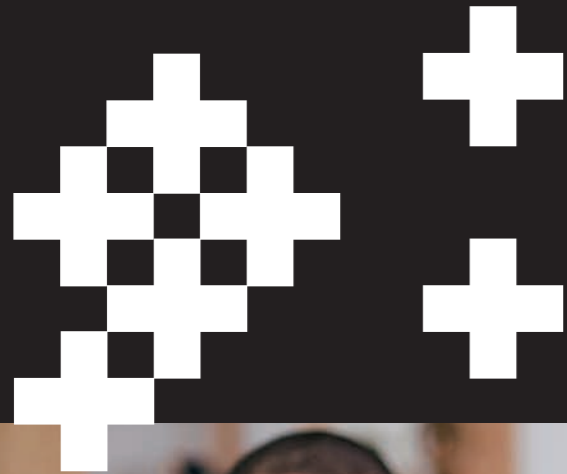
# Finance & Sustainability

## STRATEGIC AIM

We will continually review our service delivery to ensure our financial sustainability. We will plan and manage our resources to be efficient and effective, prioritising investment to improve our student experience and achieve our vision. We will respect and protect our environment, as we work towards achieving net zero carbon.

## OBJECTIVES

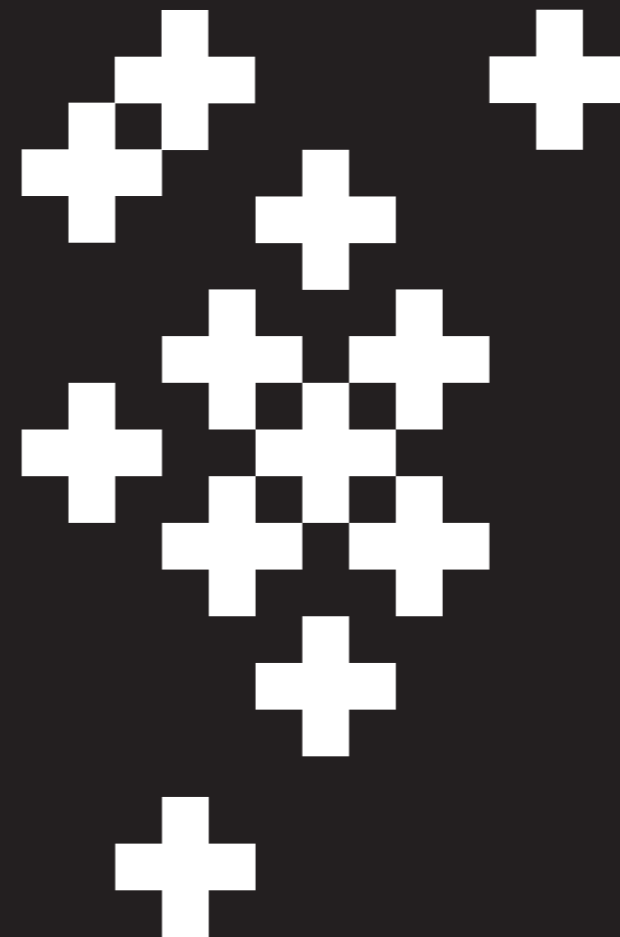
- + To maximise the tertiary curriculum offer through the effective and innovative use of resources.
- + To develop integrated reporting to better inform decision making and resource allocation, maximising efficiency and effectiveness.
- + To continue to develop alternative income streams, supporting our long-term financial stability.
- + To engage with the UHI partnership to further strengthen the accessibility of a high quality student experience and satisfy the needs of stakeholders.
- + To develop and implement strategic sustainability plans for our physical and digital infrastructure.
- + To manage and test our processes and decisions in the context of our commitment to achieving net zero carbon.



# Key Performance Indicators

## A FULL SET OF KPIS ARE SET OUT IN THE SUPPORTING SUB-STRATEGIES:-

- + Tertiary Education
- + Access and Inclusion
- + Student Partnership and Engagement
- + Talent Management
- + Sustainability
- + Research and Innovation
- + Quality Assurance Enhancement
- + Marketing
- + Digital Transformation
- + Estates and Campus Operations







This fellowship is a great opportunity to develop past work of mine on the elm and establish applied work on the restoration of the wych elm in Scotland that can be of use for years to come. I am excited to receive training in tree genetics techniques and methodologies to advance our knowledge of the wych elm in Scotland and build a network of healthy elms across the UK that can help everyone restore resilient elms back to the landscape. One of the most fun, and perhaps challenging, parts of the project will be writing the children's book *Going on an Elm Hunt*. We are hoping it may help to raise awareness and the fact that the elm still survives despite devastation over the last 100 years.

DR BOWDITCH

### SCOTTISH SCHOOL OF FORESTRY LECTURER AND RESEARCHER DR EUAN BOWDITCH

**UHI Inverness academic Dr Euan Bowditch has been named as one of nine new UK Treescapes fellows, an accolade that will enable him to focus on his work to restore wych elm tree populations.**

The fellows will bring fundamental questions about the Future of UK Treescapes to a wider audience through collaborations with stakeholders, the development of new tools, policy recommendations and public engagement activities.

The Future of UK Treescapes fellowships were launched by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), as part of the £15.6 million Future of UK Treescapes Programme, designed to improve environmental, socio-economic and cultural understandings of the functions and services provided by UK treescapes.

The fellowships are supported with a £340,000 investment from the Natural Environment Research Council, part of UKRI and Defra.

Dr Bowditch is a lecturer at the Scottish School of Forestry in Balloch and researcher at UHI Inverness, within the Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation. Last year he won an award for his research into Dutch elm disease (DED) which has killed millions of the UK's native Wych Elm – leaving eerie standing skeletons across the landscape and a perceived lack of hope for the future.

During this fellowship, in collaboration with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, Dr Bowditch will focus on identifying and collecting samples from surviving wych elms in three areas of Scotland, including the Borders and Highlands where the repeated intensive spread of DED has occurred, as well as the Scottish islands that safeguard isolated populations that remain untouched by DED.

Over 300 surviving and infected sprouting trees will be sampled and genetically analysed from these areas using microsatellite markers to understand the genetic diversity and similarity of the species across the landscape, identify the potential resilience of different populations and establish any similar traits between surviving trees.

Additionally, techniques will be learnt for breeding and reproducing elms by mixing resilient individuals together to naturally regenerate over time, to help the creation of resilient seed banks for local restoration.

Alongside this scientific exploration of resilience, Dr Bowditch will produce a children's book to raise awareness of the elm and highlight ways in which citizen scientists from all over the country can become involved in the elm hunt.

### BA (HONS) ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE RACHEL HINDE

**Rachel Hinde turned up at a UHI Inverness Open Day after redundancy and she will be forever grateful for the advice she received. It led to her studying an NC in Business and Accounting, followed by Accounting HND and in September 2022 she graduated with BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance. She is now studying a PGDE in secondary teaching at UHI Inverness and is on her way to achieving her dream to become a business teacher.**

Rachel (49) from Inverness said: "It's not that long ago I would have thought obtaining an honours degree and becoming a teacher was impossible. I hope my journey as a mature student inspires others in the same position to consider further and higher education to improve their chances of having a fulfilling and successful career."

"My highlights were the opportunities I've been presented with, the friends I've made, my lecturers, and the overall feeling of positivity being around other people committed to achieving their goals."

Rachel said the degree course suited her very well.

"Having a good grounding from learning in the HND gave me the motivation to progress on to degree, which as a current student, was an automatic pathway to work towards my personal and future employment goals without having to reapply," she said.

"The module content was so relatable to everyday life. It has helped me to think more deeply about the effects of businesses on different sections of society and the part accountancy plays in that impact, from giving strategic advice, to taxation and financial reporting standard-setting. The latter inspired my dissertation topic, and I would say the sense of achievement from carrying out and completing my own piece of research made persevering through a challenging learning experience, including adapting to learning online, entirely worthwhile. Overall, it's been great to be part of something so positive which involved not just what I was learning, but also the people I was learning with which helped to expand my ideas by listening to others."

Rachel was a Student Voice Representative for most of her time at UHI Inverness and that led to a part-time position as an Associate Trainer with Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs), giving her valuable skills to take forward into teaching.

Rachel said: "Studying at UHI Inverness has opened up so many opportunities for me from career options due to gaining higher qualifications, to meeting new people who have become friends for life. Various employment seminars provided by course lecturers, communications regarding training and job opportunities, and presentations to help with CVs and interviews by the careers department were all entirely useful for the future."



"My degree has enabled me to pursue a teaching career which has been a dream of mine ever since being reintroduced to the learning environment. I am proud and excited to be continuing my studies."

RACHEL HINDE





FOUNDATION APPRENTICE:  
CREATIVE AND DIGITAL MEDIA  
MOLLY THOMPSON

**Molly Thompson (17), from Rosemarkie, has ambitions to be a music journalist and hopes to study media at university.**

"As it's my second year, I've had the opportunity to work with the UHI Inverness marketing team every Friday and work on projects that are used to promote the campus and its courses, such as TikTok videos and Instagram posts, including my 'Day in the Life' reel which attracted at least 14,000 views.

"Going to the campus every week means I can learn things that are relevant to what I want to do, and the work experience in the marketing sector further motivates me to pursue a career in media. The Foundation Apprenticeship helps me make connections with communication professionals and build a portfolio of work which is incredibly valuable to my career prospects in such a competitive industry.

"Although it did seem a bit daunting at first, working in an office for the first time has been great and the team is incredibly supportive and easy to talk to. Having my work used to advertise UHI Inverness makes me feel as though I'm working towards something worthwhile, which has been incredibly rewarding.

"The placement has given me confidence working in a creative environment and has allowed me insight into how social media marketing works, as well as building upon the skills that I learnt in my first year of the course. Over the course of the last two years, I have learnt how to video edit, follow creative briefs, and create social media posts in professional way, much of the time whilst working within a team.

"In first year, we were given the task of creating a video to highlight computer safety. The team and I tackled this brief by creating characters and a full story line to create a short comedy clip about a Hacker. The full project was written, acted, filmed, directed and produced by the team, and I had a really great time bouncing ideas off my friends whilst still learning a lot"



Overall, I feel as though the foundation apprenticeship has given me a head start for Uni and my future in media and will help me stand out from others when applying to Uni or a job

MOLLY THOMPSON

PAINTING AND DECORATING APPRENTICE  
REBECCA MACKINNON

**Fourth year Painting and Decorating apprentice Rebecca Mackinnon was named Apprentice Paperhanger of the Year for 2022 after competing in a nationwide competition hosted by the Painting and Decorating Association (PDA).**

Rebecca (20) from Stornoway took part in a gruelling six-hour wallpaper hanging challenge at Doncaster College and University Centre in June.

The contest requires participants to complete a specific wallpaper task designed to test their precision, skill and eye for detail over six hours.

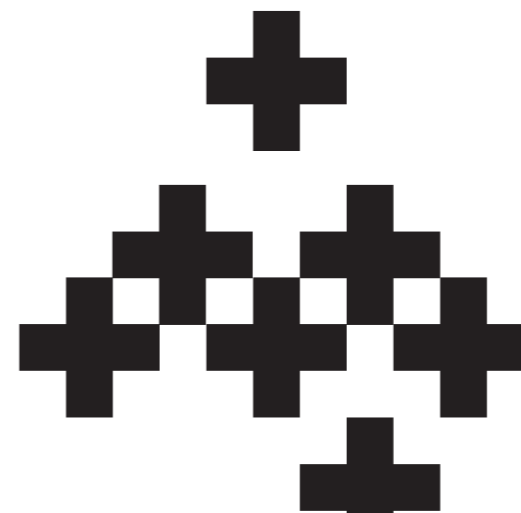
This year was Rebecca's second foray into the competition, having placed as Junior runner-up in 2021. She said: "I was over the moon when I realised I had come first.

"After taking part last year, I was definitely inspired to try again at Senior level. The first time can be overwhelming, but I knew what to expect this time.

"I always do my best at work, and in the competition, you have to just enjoy taking part, make sure you've got all your measurements right and take it from there.

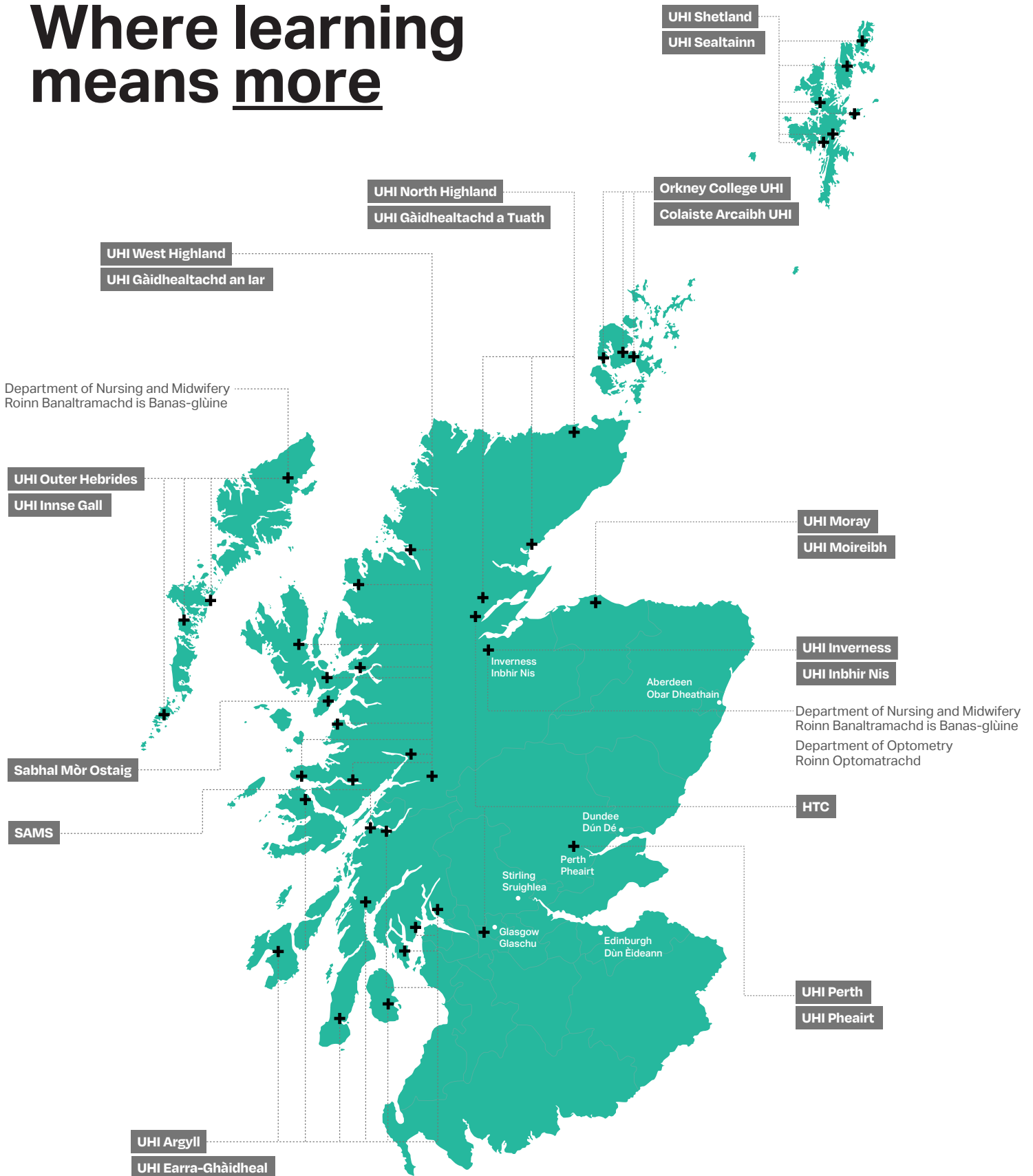
"The competition is really valuable, and I'd definitely encourage other apprentices to give it a go, it's a great experience.





"My employer and my college lecturers are really happy for me. They've been there for me and encouraged me to enter in the first place, so it's great to be able to say I've won, but the most important thing is to have taken part." Her lecturer Mark Mitchell said: "All of us at UHI Inverness are immensely proud of Rebecca's award. Last year she took second place in the New Entrant section, so it's a testament to Rebecca's dedication, hard work and resolve to go one better this year. Rebecca is an absolute credit to UHI Inverness and her employer, Neil MacKay & Co, who have supported Rebecca at every opportunity."





# Where learning means more



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