



Exploring the SLE model at SVR meetings: Assessment and Curriculum (April)

About our April SVR meetings

Our Student Learning Experience theme for our April 2026 Student Voice Representative meeting was **Assessment and Curriculum**. Background information about the [SLE model is on the sparqs website](#).

The [HISA website's SVR meetings page](#) explains more about how we use the SLE model to contribute to the enhancement of learning.

The building block Assessment & Feedback and Curriculum were chosen for April's meetings because of the opportunity to reflect on (most of) the year's learning experience in particular work-based elements (which are so important to UHI's curriculum); and get a snapshot of readiness for the year's final round of assessments.

Our meetings in April were scheduled across Academic Partners by our local teams as follows – and minutes of these can be found on our [SVR meetings page](#):

- Tuesday 21st April, 12.30pm: SAMS (online).
- Tuesday 21st April, 1.00pm: UHI North, West and Hebrides (online).
- Tuesday 21st April, 1.00pm: UHI Inverness (in person).
- Wednesday 22nd April, 12.00pm: UHI Argyll (online).
- Wednesday 22nd April, 12.30pm: UHI Shetland (in person).
- Wednesday 22nd April, 12.00pm: UHI Moray (in person).
- Thursday 23rd April, 4.00pm: UHI North, West and Hebrides (online).
- Tuesday 28th April, 12.30pm: UHI Perth (in person).

A total of 42 SVRs attended these meetings.

Discussion was generated both at those meetings and in the SVR Teams space, around three questions. These were chosen as they reflect current priorities for HISA and the themes in wider student feedback we are receiving, and they help shape our approach to the future of learning and teaching through UHI Transformation and other strategic conversations.

1. How ready do you and your classmates feel for your end of year assessments?
2. Tell us the reasons for your answer... and what would help?
3. How would you describe the work placements or work-based elements of your learning this year?

The following is a summary of comments and discussions.



1. How ready do you and your classmates feel for your end of year assessments?

This question was set to generate answers on a quantitative scale.

Level of readiness	Votes
AAAAAAAAAARGHHH!	15
Slightly ready	3
In the middle	14
Quite ready	12
Very ready!	11

It should be noted that this is a quantitative snapshot, so few conclusions can be drawn. While meeting-specific breakdown of this data will be reported to relevant APs, it is unsurprising, given the diversity of learning experiences across UHI, that there is a significant spread of results across the spectrum.

2. Tell us the reasons for your answer... and what would help?

A number of major themes emerged in the qualitative feedback. The first related to the **schedules of assessment**. SVRs referred to busy timetables, for examples with multiple assessments on top of other course commitments such as field trips. For instance SVR reported they had five assignments due in five days all with different methods. Many felt that, with assessment spread over the academic year, their burden at the end of the year was not bad compared to earlier. One positive noted was the importance of reliable and transparent assessment scheduling by staff, an especially valuable step for supporting neurodiverse students.

Relatedly, and also unsurprisingly give the diversity of learning formats and levels at UHI, many students commented on **the nature of assessment** in their course as shaping their views. Many students did not have assessments at the present time, because they were at the stage of a dissertation or portfolio composition. Others were in courses that had continuous (or no) assessment, and many of these sympathised with other SVRs whose classes were experiencing a stressful time.

These comments would suggest the value of a conversation with staff and management about the shaping of the system for assessment formats and assessments. This could generate useful learning for SVRs about the logistical and regulatory limitations on how assessments are created, as well as identify pinch points about where risks or opportunities for improved, and even co-created, communication might lie.

Unsurprisingly, another major theme was **the value of good support during assessment time**. There was substantial praise for teaching and support staff when students are stressed or not confident, and a minority of observations about not being able to find that support or the relevant materials required for practical assessments.

Students' own **emotional reactions to assessments and time management** was a significant factor too, with many reps reporting fear, stress and concern among their fellow students. One



SVR noted the importance of time management, and another suggested readiness for assessment was as much down to individuals' own behaviour and engagement in their learning. It is likely that assessments will always be a particularly challenging part of the learning journey. As an SVR starkly noted, "*I just don't like tests. Never have and never will!*"

3. How would you describe the work placements or work-based elements of your learning this year?

Many SVRs reported not necessarily having work-based learning, but **similar activities that helped their practical skills** such as field trips or laboratory work. This was an especially strong theme among SAMS SVRs.

Other reps who did not have work-based learning pointed to the **value of own part-time work and volunteering opportunities** outside their studies.

There was not a high volume of input from SVRs who did have work-based learning or placements, though that little feedback was broadly positive.

The low level of feedback about work placements might suggest some correlation between those reps who have work-based learning (including apprentices) and programmes with low SVR numbers and/or those SVRs unable to make SVR meetings. Given the importance of work-based learning to UHI's curriculum, and the obvious need to ensure good feedback on those aspects to learning, there could be value in a more detailed study about the experiences of UHI students on work placements and the best ways for the SVR system to learn from them.

Where relevant, we are taking up individual comments with relevant staff in UHI/APs. All comments are also being taken on board to inform HISA's approaches and activities. Minutes of individual local meetings are on our [SVR meetings page](#).

HISA
May 2026