

Exploring the SLE model at SVR meetings: Learning and Teaching Delivery (December)

Our Student Learning Experience theme for our December 2025 Student Voice Representative meetings is **Learning and Teaching Delivery**.

Background information about the [SLE model is on the sparqs website](#), and the [HISA website's SVR meetings page](#) explains more about how we use the model to contribute to the enhancement of learning.

December's theme: Learning and Teaching Delivery

The building block Learning and Teaching Delivery was chosen for December's meetings to get student input at a time when the semester is well under way and students will likely have experienced a range of different classes and types of delivery.

Our meetings in December were scheduled across Academic Partners by our local teams as follows:

- UHI Inverness: Tuesday 2nd (in-person)
- UHI Orkney: Monday 8th (online)
- UHI Argyll: Tuesday 9th (online)
- UHI Inverness Tuesday 9th (online)
- UHI North, West and Hebrides: Tuesday 9th and Thursday 11th (both online)
- UHI Shetland: Wednesday 10th (online)
- UHI Perth: Wednesday 10th (in-person) and Monday 15th (online)
- UHI Moray: Thursday 11th (in-person)
- SAMS: Thursday 11th (online)

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 do you feel about the contact time in your course?
2. Do you have sufficient opportunities to interact with your fellow students in class, for instance group work?
3. How well does online delivery work for you, where you have it?

The following is a summary of comments and discussions.

1. How do you feel about the contact time in your course?

Overall, comments about contact time were positive, with the biggest cluster of comments indicating **general satisfaction and praise**. Often such remarks were brief, but where detail

was given, specifics highlighted included a very good balance between in-person and self-study, the relevance of the contact time to the nature of the course or to specific aspects such as assignments, and the success of the contact time in contributing to learning.

A related theme was specific **praise for teaching and support staff** in contact time, for instance their being:

- Knowledgeable.
- Responsive to difficulties and struggles in learning such as gaps in understanding.
- Available and easy to contact.

To quote one SVR: *“I feel lecturers go out of their way to make themselves as accessible as possible and ensure we feel well supported.”*

Various contributions referred to the specific **dynamics of contact time in online courses**.

Some SVRs observed that online contact time was harder to engage with, and led to difficulties getting to know students in that environment. One SVR suggested *“some of the other modules could do with some more team calls contact especially for assessments”*, and one expressed a preference for more in-person class time.

A final cluster of comments expressed a variety of **concerns about the limits of time and resource** in contact time, for instance one to one time with staff, some limits to workshop time, and lecturers having insufficient resources and teaching supplies (for instance laptop in a childcare course). One SVR judged that contact time was sufficient only with sufficient attendance and understanding. One noted they had limited contact time and that sometimes answers could not always be obtained by email. On the other hand, one rep observed that *“time is too much at times of multiple deadlines”*. Others complained about the difficulty in contact time, with one referring to those perceived as less able getting more help and those with low confidence not getting enough, and another stating *“given certain coursemates making it hard to focus or get time to talk with staff if needed”*.

It is likely that UHI Transformation will be an avenue for exploring these areas for development, because of the big questions about the future of learning especially in online environments.

2. Do you have sufficient opportunities to interact with your fellow students in class, for instance group work?

Generally, comments illustrated that there was clearly a **variety of levels of interactivity within classes**. Specific references described day to day activities such as group, pair work and all-class discussions in in-person delivery, breakout rooms in online delivery, plus a range of practical, outdoor, fieldwork and laboratory activities. SVRs also reported lecturers encouraging collaboration and often responding to demand for interactivity from students. SVRs have also been encouraged to set up social media groups and channels. On balance comments were very positive, albeit often undetailed, with a small but notable minority of comments reporting that there was insufficient or absolutely no interaction, or that classmates are not interacting in class or turning cameras on in online learning, and one SVR complaining of too much interaction with over half of work being done in groups.

Another set of comments revealed useful **lessons for balance in the design of learning**. For instance one SVR noted the value of fieldwork for interactivity and lectures needing less interactivity. Another pointed out differences over years of study with more independent study early in the course and more interactivity later on. Others reported that it was dependent on the

nature of the module, the personalities of the class, or the physical layout of rooms (with clusters being more conducive than rows). Reps also highlighted the value of breaks to enable interactivity, and the importance of a mix of class and library time.

These nuanced comments on the design of learning would suggest an insufficiently exploited value of student involvement in this area. There is considerable scope for us to explore this in partnership not least in the context of UHI Transformation.

Although the question was specifically about in-class interactivity, many reps pointed to the **lack of ability to meet students outside classes**, something we covered more deeply in our [November report on community and belonging](#). There was significant recognition of geography here, with references to students on small islands, and splits of courses across a number of big locations across the region.

3. How well does online delivery work for you, where you have it?

While obviously not all courses are delivered online, there were a range of comments from those in this mode. Many reps highlighted **difficulties in connections** – both technical and human – in online delivery. One rep highlighted the unsuitability of online delivery for vocations generally associated with in-person work, and another talked about the lack of motivation to turn up for online classes compared to in-person. Feedback was also received about Brightspace compatibility for uploading from iOS/Apple devices and a desire for standard layout and a dark mode for accessibility. Others, including at UHI North, West and Hebrides, reported features of online delivery on programmes that they would have not continued with had they known, such as courses being delivered online despite being promised prior to enrolment to be on campus, and classes being scheduled for evenings.

Another theme related to **problems in the use of digital learning tools**, including, in Brightspace, password-locked areas not working, errors and unreliability in resources, and materials from the previous year still being in place leading to uncertainty about relevance. There was also a comment about difficulty tracking assessments at the end of the semester, and another about perceived variability in staff capability in online tools.

Examples of difficulties and variable use of Brightspace came from across the UHI partnership, with some specific comments at UHI North, West and Hebrides in the context of that college's recent merger, where practice on Brightspace was reported as especially wide ranging. This included a lack of adherence to UHI standard approaches for Brightspace, and discussion areas within modules routinely not being switched on meaning students are unable to communicate with each other.

Given the current developments in Brightspace at UHI, it might be recommended that some further testing or focus groups of Brightspace users is undertaken to respond to and support institutional developments/rollouts and student induction into its use. This could either be in later SVR meetings or, perhaps more usefully, in dedicated feedback spaces with learning technology and academic development staff to explore tools such as Brightspace in greater detail. With UHI Transformation presenting questions about the future of learning in UHI and the prospect of more use of digital learning, such work would seem very valuable and timely.

That said, **positive feedback on learning tools such as Brightspace and Teams** was also received, including about the flexibility of class recordings, and good use by staff of breakout

rooms, videos, shared screens, weekly emails and Brightspace announcements. It was also noted by reps that the online environment makes it easier for those uncomfortable for interacting in-person.

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.

HISA

December 2025