



Exploring the SLE model at SVR meetings: Support and Guidance (March)

About our February SVR meetings

Our Student Learning Experience theme for our March 2026 Student Voice Representative meeting was **Support and Guidance**. 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 Support and Guidance was chosen for March's meeting because of the relevance of the topic and the ability for students to reflect on most of an academic year's study while looking ahead to future steps.

We held just one SVR meeting due to a number of other priorities in March including the Student Elections.

Discussion was generated at this meeting 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 such as UHI's retention enhancement project.

1. Did you get the support you needed at the start of the year? How has that support changed over the academic year?
2. How much do you know about Personal Learning Support Plans? What would you tell other students about them?
3. What makes you and other students stay on your course?

The following is a summary of comments and discussions.

1. Did you get the support you needed at the start of the year? How has that support changed over the academic year?

Input from SVRs tended to cluster around two broad messages. Firstly, for many there is **good and consistent support** from PATs, lecturers and others (including HISA). This includes with regard to academic problems, support for disabilities, and the building of in-class community. As one rep put it, *"my PAT has always been very supportive of all of us throughout the year! She has always let us talk to her about anything if we needed to."*

A second theme reported **declining, variable or patchy support**. Within this, a number of SVRs commented that PATs were not consistently available, due to limited working hour or changes



in PAT allocations, meaning students are not contacted. One rep reported that students were only coming forward with problems when they arose so staff have begun to be more forward and have individual chats with students. Others suggested that support varied across subjects and between levels of the college (eg lecturers being perceived as more supportive than the college overall).

To quote one SVR, “*Feedback gathered from my class unanimously highlights that we all have felt a lack of support throughout the whole year and feel this year we have had less support compared to previous years.*”

Whether this is down to resourcing and capacity, or other factors, this is clearly worth exploring further. This is also in the context of past SVR meetings receiving comments about variability in support.

2. How much do you know about Personal Learning Support Plans? What would you tell other students about them?

This question was asked in the context of rising use of PLSPs. Half of SVRs in the meeting knew little about them.

Those that knew about PLSPs either had personal experience of setting one up, knew of others in their class who had them, or had learned about it from HISA. The one attempted definition of a PLSP in the meeting by an SVR was accurate: “*A document designed to help students who may have additional support needs*”. A number of SVRs were comfortable that they would know how to refer a student if they sensed there were support needs, and/or had actually done so.

These responses suggest that SVRs, when equipped with the knowledge of support structures, and of how to signpost appropriately, will do so confidently. HISA can give consideration to fuller support services signposting in its SVR training.

3. What makes you and other students stay on your course?

In the light of UHI’s Retention Enhancement Project, this question explores not the negatives (the reasons for dropping out) but the positives (what works to keep people studying).

Many responses helped identify the **strengths in learning experiences**, ranging from the delivery of interesting content, to collaborative classrooms, and from good support to excellent staff (as one SVR puts it, “*They make us feel inspired to do more things related to the course and make us feel positive in attitude and in our projects.*”

However, there were also many unprompted comments about why students are **contemplating not continuing in their studies**, citing a lack of support, poor classroom atmospheres including bullying, the difficulty of the level of study, and a lack of opportunity for social and academic interaction among students. This chimes with feedback received through other sources, and as noted in last month’s SLE report the lack of community and opportunities for students to socialise is a major priority for HISA.



HISA is also taking up some concerning and detailed descriptions of bullying in the meeting with relevant management both within APs and at a university level, and has referred students to the HISA Advice Service.

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
March 2026