

University of Brighton Students' Union

Academic Forum – School of Architecture and Design

Held - 16th November 2010 at the Huxley Building, Moulsecoomb

Present - 3 students (all Grand Parade based students)

Chair –Emily-Ann Nash (EAN)

Secretary – Katrina Mayo

1. The session commenced discussing NSS data for the School of Architecture and Design. This led to students raising the following points:

- Organisation is raised as an issue on the NSS data, this continues to be talked about. At the start of the year timetables were wrong and events were cancelled
- A text system has now been introduced to alert students to changes , this is very good and appreciated
- Some students felt that the 1st year critical studies lectures were more heavily weighted towards fashion than 3D and would like them to be more balanced
- The professional practice business studies lectures are sometimes poorly structured and variable in quality
- Students have been turned away from inductions when the capacity for the number that can be taught is reached. They appreciate that a lot of the tutors are part-time and they are very busy but this can lead to inductions being received after projects have commenced
- The courses mostly run very well

EAN raised hidden course costs

- The materials fee this year is £180. The students present all felt that this was a fair system given the amount of materials they use.
- Students raised how expensive they find the GP Union shop compared with their school shop. Some materials such as sketchbooks seem fairly priced but others such as card and acetate are very expensive

In a general discussion of assessment, students felt this was currently spread quite well through the year

The library provision at St Peters is good, though it would be helpful if it could open at 8:00am, so that students can access the library prior to going to the studio. Longer opening hours at the weekend would also be useful.

2. The discussion then moved on to what attributes in teachers should be recognised / rewarded by the student body. The following features were identified:

- People who really help with the 'nitty gritty' (often technicians)
- Approachability
- Inspiring – can bring something completely different that feeds into your thinking
- Active in arranging extracurricular trips

3. ICT/ E-learning and the developments that would be useful in these areas were then discussed. The following points were raised:

- The students spend a lot of time at college, often in crits, talking about work, bouncing ideas. They like this approach – feeling that they are very much visual people and would not like a move to virtual learning.
- It can be hard to find things on studentcentral. They have been told lectures are available on line but should be given more instruction on where/how to find them.
- An Online library task has been set. It has not been made clear what the purpose of this assignment is. There needs to be greater clarity when e-tasks are set.
- On line submission has been introduced – it is hard to see the actual submission button
- A blog where people could post interesting items/events would be good

4. EAN raised the issue of increased fees. If fees were increased the following were raised as improvements/developments students would like to see

- Ability to work more with gold and other expensive materials
- The materials fee should be absorbed into the fees and not be a separate charge
- A photocopying allowance of £5/ week
- Lots of guest speakers
- More contact time with tutors
- The ability to do all courses part-time

The fee increase would put a lot of students off from studying 3D at University – they would be likely to look at other options such as apprenticeships, or directly starting up businesses

The students would like to be kept fully informed by the University and the Union as to developments in funding and fees and the impact this will have. They suggested an evening event at the Sallis Beney. EAN will discuss this with the university.

Action points for reps:

It is important for students to receive accurate information and timetables to enable them to properly prepare for the coming term. This appears to have been a problem as does the timetabling of inductions at the beginning of the year. Discuss with your course mates what students need from the induction period and take this feedback to your Course Leader.

Is there a good balance of lectures? Gather your fellow students views and discuss with your Course Leader or at the next Course Board meeting.