

University of Brighton Students' Union

UCH Academic Forum

6th December 2010-12-14

Emily-Ann Nash (EAN) explains that Academic Forums are usually held in Schools, at UCH we will have students from different schools. She is glad to have representation of the wider student population from Hastings, we have 7 students representing: Broadcast Media, Art & Design, PGCE, Computing, Business and Applied Social Sciences.

EAN explained that having students' Academic Forums is a great tool because they give her first hand information from the students on issues affecting them. The university has responded well to their demands and is acting towards solving the issues raised.

Issues raised:

UCH closure due to snow:

Due to the weather conditions UCH was closed for three days. A student pointed out that now she has to comply with very tight deadlines because she doesn't have the necessary software to do the assignments from home, although some deadlines have been moved others haven't, putting a lot of pressure on her. A student pointed out that it would be useful if the University bought students' software licenses.

Communication with students

EAN asked how the university communicate with them in terms of change of lecture times/place or for example last's week snow closure: the university contact them via student central, email, notice boards and plasma screens. Sometimes email from uni is sent to the spam folder, EAN said that this issue has been brought up before and it's being dealt with.

Regarding last week's snow situation: some found out via student central and Facebook. It was pointed out that the internet connection in the Robert Tressell Halls and people living in Robertson Terrace (both managed by Roost Group) have very bad internet connection, although internet access is included in their bill and contract.

EAN explained that other campuses have a text messaging system, where students enter their mobile number allowing them to be informed of this kind of situation, she asked the students to raise this issue with their course leaders to explore the possibility to have the system implemented at UCH.

Library and learning resources:

EAN asked what UCH's library opening times are and if they are suitable for their needs.

Library opens:

Monday to Thursday: 8.45-20.00, Friday: 8.45-17.00, Saturday: 9.00-16.00

EAN explained that UoB has 9 campuses with their own libraries and to keep them open costs hundreds of pounds per hour. Aldrich Library in Moulsecomb opens till 21.00 and during exam times opens 24 hours. The pool room is open until 02.00 and during weekends.

At UCH the pool room is open: Monday – Thursday 9.00 – 21.00, Friday 9.00 – 19.00, Saturday 9.00 – 16.00.

It was noted that these times are not sufficient to the students needs, but also that the software installed in them is not fit to requirements for some courses, for example Computing and Broadcast Media.

Learning and Teaching Awards:

EAN explained that the SU will establish the mentioned awards to highlight the efforts made by admin and teaching staff to improve the students' experience. She asked them to describe in one word positive attributes about staff:

- Knowledgeable
- Friendly
- Helpful
- Approachable
- Enthusiastic
- Interested about your concerns
- The have to love what they do
- Excite you about the subject they teach

Tuition Fees:

EAN mentioned that she will be meeting the 5 MPs who cover Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings area.

She has done research in the Browne Review and the Spending Review. What the government is trying to do is to fill the gap on University funding by increasing the tuition fees, however the money raised will not cover the deficit in Universities funding. She asked, if you were to pay £9000 what you would expect to receive in return:

- More contact hours
- Having more contact with the people in the industry or field they study
- More access to relevant software, in fact a student mentioned she would expect access to all the software she needs for her course
- More access to books and learning resources
- More desk books and longer library opening hours
- A student mentioned that at SCSH (Hastings College) students doing higher education courses are treated like teenagers, when in fact most of them are mature students

EAN asked if they would go to University should the fees are raised:

One student mentioned that being a mature student (24 years of age) she feels she is ready to study at Uni and would be willing to pay £9000, because she thinks the end justifies the means. To have a degree is worth the money you are paying. It was also mentioned that in the current economic climate having a degree doesn't guarantee you a job when you finish your course.

One student said she won't be able to afford it, she would be charged more than her family income. A discussion followed regarding this point, it was mentioned that students don't have to pay it up front until you start earning £21000, the same student thinks the problem with the government's proposal is that it hasn't been explained properly to students.

EAN asked what points they would like her to raise with Amber Rudd:

- This proposal will limit the number of people going to uni
- It will take Britain to the times when only the elite can go to uni
- To be more clear about how you will pay the fees when you finish your degree

EAN finished the forum thanking the students for attending and the feedback given to her.

Action points for reps

- Raise the possibility of staff making use of the SMS alerts to ensure students have access to information about closures / cancelled lectures at a time when they need it.
- Discuss with your course about their computer access and software needs. What does the university provide? Does it meet your needs? If not, why not – and what would?
- Did you have deadlines extended on your course because of the snow? If so, was this useful? If not, why not? There is clearly a disparity between the experiences of students on different courses. It would be useful to explore what informed the decision making.