

University of Brighton Students' Union

Academic Forum – Humanities

Held – 13th January 2011 at Mayfield House, Falmer

Present – 3 students

Chair – Emily Ann Nash (EAN)

Secretary – Katrina Mayo

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

- There was agreement with the positive comments about the approachability and knowledge of tutors, the availability of tutorial time and good class sizes
- They agreed with the comment that there are not always enough copies of the books needed in the library.
- There can be organisational problems within the school caused by many small courses, timetables can be confused and students are as a result not always sure where they should be.
- Information arrives very late. Students still do not know which of their module choices they have been given for the second semester, despite having made their selections in the summer.
- The purpose of extension studies was never clearly communicated to students.
- The poor organisation of one module was raised. Individually lectures were good but as they were all taught by different lecturers often from different departments, they were not cohesive and did not link up, which left students confused.
- There is no colour printer at Pavilion Parade / Grand Parade, which causes problems as colour images are required in submitted work.
- There is not enough opportunity to speak with lecturers after lectures at Pavilion Parade, students go straight into seminar groups, where there are student presentations but no actual opportunity to discuss the lecture they have just had. They would welcome the opportunity to discuss the lectures in the seminar groups

Library Resources were then discussed

St Peters House is relatively small and does not hold as many copies of books as the other libraries. In particular it does not hold Architecture books which are needed by Pavilion Parade students. Its opening hours are also comparatively short.

Falmer Library. The library does not open until 9:00 and closes at 8:00. Students would like the opportunity to visit the library before classes start at 9:00. As the library closes at 8:00 students tend to take books out rather than read them in the library (which they would if it remained open longer), this creates shortages of essential books for others.

EAN explained the resourcing issues, security and safety issues behind the current opening hours.

The possibility of a study room in the Checkland Building being available for students to read library books out of hours was raised.

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

- Text messaging is not currently being used in the school, email is the main form of communication. Text messaging would be a helpful development.
- Students central is being used well.
- Currently tutorials are booked by lists pinned to doors. Can they become bookable on line? Dissertation students who are working at home have to come all the way into university just to reserve a slot on the sheet.

3. EAN raised the issue of increased fees. If fees were at the proposed increased level the students present felt they would still have gone to University. The following were raised as improvements/developments students would like to see if fees were increased (though they did think that most people are aware that the University will not have more money to spend when fees go up)

- Increased contact time was discussed. On some courses only 5 hours/week in the first year, initially students were not happy with this but now recognise that their personal learning in the intervening hours is as, or more important
- Parking on site should be available for students at Falmer (if fees go up there will be a lot more students studying from home who may need to travel by car to get to University)
- 24 hour libraries
- More resources such as HD cameras to loan. Currently only 3 HD cameras available for 38 students on a media module. Not having access to a camera will effect students final grades

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

- Real support and a dedication to improving the students experience. For example a librarian who gave up an hour of their time to show students how to access journals on line
- Enthusiasm – that makes you care about a subject
- Go out of their way to direct you towards other resources and routes of enquiry
- Push you hard, so that you exceed your own expectations of yourself.

The following teaching method was then discussed – A tutor has created a space on line where you put up your own work and critique that of fellow students. All students need to do this to pass. This has been a very good learning experience and has given a voice to the quieter students in class.

Action Points for Reps

It is important for students to receive accurate and timely information about timetables and module choices, to enable them to properly prepare. Discuss with your course mates whether the information they receive is accurate and useful. Ask what works and whether they can identify any improvements. Take these views to your Course Leader

Could communication be improved by the use of text messaging? Would an online tutorial booking system be of benefit? Gather your fellow students' views on these and discuss at your next Course Board

Can an opportunity to discuss lectures be timetabled for Pavilion Parade students? Discuss with other students and take the shared view to your Course Leader.