

University of Brighton Students' Union

Academic Forum – School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Science

Held - 15th November 2010 at the Huxley Building, Moulsecoomb

Chair – Anthony Lewis (AL) and Emily-Ann Nash (EAN)

Secretary – Katrina Mayo

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

- Timetabling can be an issue when students have to move between Mithras and the Huxley building (picking up lab coats en route in the Cockcroft building) with sessions timetabled back to back. Staff have responded by creating an area for lab coat storage in the Huxley but it would be helpful to also look at the timing of the first lecture. Generally the timetable has improved from last year.
- Looking at the NSS data, organisation and feedback seemed to be the main themes emerging. Students present felt that the teaching and lectures in the school are good. Feedback is received on most work that is submitted, lab feedback is slow but this was not felt to be a problem
- Placements. Most of the placements available are pharmaceutical; there is a lack of chemistry placements (students have to search these out themselves). There should be more equality in the placements available for the two streams (pharmacy and chemistry). Students suggested links could be made with environmental science to establish placements that were available to students across the faculty
- The school has responded to the first year of the pharmacy course being 'too easy' by moving two modules. Essays are spaced quite well throughout the year, there was a problem previously when there were too many deadlines in the second semester

AL raised the high rate of academic misconduct in PABS and asked students for their opinion as to why this might be occurring. Students responded

- The courses in PABS are very multicultural and there may be cultural differences regarding the use of copied material

- Pharmacy is a very hard degree with a lot of pressure to deliver work, this could lead to students under stress 'cutting corners'

EAN raised the issue of the weighting of modules

- There are 30 credit modules which are too large to be compensated or trailed , so students can end up having to repeat years when they have only failed a small part of the module

2. E-learning and the developments that would be useful in this area were then discussed. The following points were raised:

- Online tests on student central have been used by the school, students liked these and the ability to keep repeating the tests, which is a good aid to learning
- Students have experienced problems with the 'Introduction to library services' module. These relate to the library test. The computer marks answers as incorrect when not entered in specific formats that are not indicated on the test (eg inclusion of brackets around a book reference number). This is a module that needs to be passed, the problem has been brought up with IS and the module leader.
- Students would like to receive text notices of cancelled and altered lecture times
- It should be possible to access lectures off site, this would help if someone was unwell and not able to come in.
- ICT is only as good as the people who use it.
- Some students hide books (for their own use) in the library making them inaccessible to other students. As the computer shows that a book is available, it is not possible for other students to then put in a request for the book. It should be possible to put in a request even if a book is shown on the record system as being in the library

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

- Enthusiasm
- Ease of contact / approachable
- Engagement and love of their subject

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

- Accommodation guaranteed for first years
- No charge for the introductory week for international students
- Free printing and photocopying
- Handouts for every lecture – many students prefer hard copies, not everyone has printing facilities at home to print out from studentcentral

- Lecture notes could be given out the week before a lecture, giving students the opportunity to read around the subject and prepare.
- More computers in the library (the pool room is always full at lunchtimes)
- All core text books should be loaned to students for the duration of the course

Action / discussion points for course reps:

- PABS reports some of the highest numbers of academic misconduct in the university (41 of 143 minor cases and 15 of 93 major cases in 2008 / 09) what is it about PABS courses or PABS students that lead to figures like this?
- There appears to be a listening culture in PABS. Reps / students say things and changes are made. Where could the rest of the university learn from this?
- Where could even more of the change agenda be devolved to students?
- There is still some room for improvement in the way PABS communicates with students. Should all tutors be making use of the text service that is available via Studentcentral? Discuss this with your course and then take the shared views to your course team.