



Press Release
For immediate release

Brighton's free degree as good as any other

The phrase "You get what you pay for" isn't necessarily true when it comes to a university education. At least not in Brighton & Hove!

Last year, Free University Brighton (FUB) launched a free degree-level course in Social Science and Humanities to make higher education accessible to local people. The course has now been independently validated as "comparable in terms of level to a first year undergraduate course at a conventional university".

The validation was carried out by a body of independent academics from other universities, the same process used to validate conventional establishments like the University of Sussex and University of Brighton.

Carlie Goldsmith, a criminologist who teaches Crime, Inequalities and Justice on the course said: "We're proud and delighted that this course has been given formal recognition. It means anyone living in the city can get the same quality education as any other undergraduate, without paying a penny. It's a remarkable achievement."

Two students of the free university who will enter their second year this September are Brian Berwick and Robert Perdicou. They feel the students have been boosted by this validation. Robert said: "I thought FUB was a wonderful chance to further my education and learn new things about myself and the world. I'm really happy to find out we have independent validation, it's given me a new spark!"

Brian added: "The lectures are the highlight of my week and I miss them when we have a break. I feel proud that my educational achievement is now recognised."

If passed, the government's new Higher Education and Research Bill will lift the cap on what some universities can charge for their courses. Almost all English universities charge the current maximum of £9,000 per year which has seen the average student debt rise to around £44,000.

Free University Brighton is taking on more students this September. Their registration event is at 12.30pm on Saturday 30 July at the Marlborough Pub and Theatre in Princes Street opposite the Royal Pavilion. There will be a chance to meet some of the teachers and students and sign up for the course.

ENDS

Editor's notes:

1. For more information or to arrange interviews email:
contact@freeuniversitybrighton.org
2. Free University Brighton organises and promotes free educational events in and around Brighton & Hove. Our aim is to create an alternative education system that benefits us all, whatever our financial means.
We ask local people to share their knowledge and skills and we create accessible learning events by turning public spaces into 'classrooms'. We promote these events through the free university website and social media. Find us at www.freeuniversitybrighton.org
3. The degree-level course will be a full academic year (three terms of 8 weeks) starting in September 2016. Students will study one session a week around 2-3 hours.
4. Subjects covered in year 1 will include: Crime, Inequalities and Justice; Alternative Economics: A Critique of Political Economy; Media, Communication & Propaganda; An Introduction to Philosophy, (Epistemology & Ethics); Alternative Societies; The International Relations of the Middle East; Contemporary Political Economy of Africa, and Latin America: Revolution, Repression and Social Change.
5. The registration session will take place at the Marlborough Pub & Theatre, 4 Princes Street, Brighton BN2 1RD on Saturday 30 July at 12.30pm.
6. The Coalition Government trebled university tuition fees in 2012. The average level of student debt now exceeds £44,000, with almost half of graduates paying back more than they borrowed. Research by the Institute of Fiscal Studies shows that most students will be paying back loans into their 40s and 50s, leaving people vulnerable at a time when their family costs are at a peak.
7. The Government's new Higher Education and Research Bill (2016) was presented to Parliament in May. If passed, it will allow certain universities to raise tuition fees beyond the current cap of £9,000 per year.