

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Is Free University Brighton actually free?**

Yes. There are no tuition fees whatsoever.

## **How does that work?**

Everyone who organises and teaches at FUB is an unpaid volunteer and most of the venues we use for teaching/ learning are donated to us. We use the internet and free apps (software) to organise and share resources with learners and do not charge for any of the sessions we offer. FUB has received a small amount of donations to help us pay for rooms where we can't get access free space. It is often a particular challenge for us getting access to larger rooms, for example.

## **Why have a free university?**

The massive increase in tuition fees, government cuts and privatisation are putting education out of reach for many of us. Now, more than ever, we need free education **for all** regardless of ability to pay.

FUB is both a protest against the growing marketisation of Higher Education, as well as a positive and constructive response to it. FUB offers a free University-level degrees to create a more democratic educational experience where teachers and learners learn from each other. What's on offer is decided by local people and placed into the heart the community by making use of existing public spaces.

## **How does it work?**

FUB runs a three- to four-year, degree-level course in social science available to learners at no cost. Learners take one two and a half hour class a week over three terms of a whole academic year. They can obtain a certificate for attendance (over 75% attendance required), or by assessment (one assessment submitted for each of the three terms on a pass basis).

## **What's on offer?**

Modules on the course cover a range of subjects including Criminology, Political Economy, Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Politics, International Relations, Gender, Feminism and Sexuality.

### **Who teaches on the Freegree and why?**

The majority of courses on the FUB degree are taught by professional academics from the respected Middlesex, Sussex, Southampton, Kingston, Brighton and Greenwich universities. Their interest in volunteering stems from their dissatisfaction with the current state of the Higher Education, and their commitment to public education that is available to all at no cost.

### **Where does it happen?**

Anywhere in Brighton & Hove! This includes Universities and colleges, public libraries, community centres, cafés, and unused buildings. In fact, just about any building or space that people are willing to offer up for the love of learning.

Recent FUB sessions have been held at the Student Union of the University of Sussex, The Brighthelm Centre, The Synergy Centre, the City Clean Learning Centre, the BMECP, while taster events, induction and registration days have been hosted at The Bevy pub, and The Marlborough Pub and Theatre.

### **What are the commitments in terms of course work, amount of reading etc.?**

The courses have been designed so that people who work, care for others or have other commitments can still do them. Therefore, there will be one study session per week of around 2 - 3 hours and reading / coursework will be minimal. However we will be glad to recommend more reading and coursework for those who want it

### **I find reading and writing difficult, will there be any help or support?**

Yes. The courses have been designed so that learning is mainly done through group talks and discussion. Teachers do provide reading resources but we also try and supplement these with alternative resources such as video and sound clips where possible.

Course assignments can be done in a number of ways: some prefer to submit written essays but you can also do a poster presentation, make a film or sound recording, have a face to face discussion (like a viva) or another method.

We are open to creative and new ideas but essentially, we will be assessing your understanding of the subject and whether you have successfully answered the assignment's question.

We will provide help and support to those who need it. It is best to contact us and let us know your needs so we can work out how best to support you.

### **How many years will it take to complete the freegree course?**

At least four. After year one you will receive a certificate. Year two will be equivalent to a diploma and we envisage it will take 4 years to complete the degree, but this may be longer depending on patterns of study and modules completed.

Please note that this higher education course has been designed to be part time to ensure it is accessible to those who work, have caring responsibilities or other commitments. Therefore, the amount of study time/material covered will be less than a conventional degree.

### **Can I just attend some of the modules?**

Yes. If you don't wish to work towards a degree, you can just choose the subjects you like. We aim to give people a university or higher education experience. Some people are interested in learning for the fun of it and others want the achievement of working for and gaining a degree. Both are welcome and valid.

### **Are you offering the same degrees as other universities?**

No. Our aim is to establish a higher education course that is a genuine alternative to the ones offered by British universities.

We began this project by listing all the things we consider to be bad about conventional universities and throwing them into the bin! For example competition, stratifying learners by grading, education that is oriented to what achieves the most income for a university rather than what is educationally or socially good.

We then designed this course on what we believe education should be about. For example, educational curiosity, discovery, self-development, building intellectual self-confidence, learning for pleasure and, of course, education that is accessible to all.

In many ways what we are offering is comparable to a conventional university degree. But we are confident we can offer people a better educational experience, one that is free and open to all, is collaborative rather than competitive and is jointly directed by teachers and learners.

### **Will this degree be recognised by employers?**

That really depends on the employer, and how much emphasis they put on conventional education institutions.

Our course will be taught by the same professors and lecturers working at conventional universities, and our educational content and outcomes will be validated by independent academics as meeting a certain standard. Conventional universities also self-validate using external assessors, so we are confident that our course is as good as any other higher education course.

It is important to note that our 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.

More information on validation can be found on the link below:

<http://freeuniversitybrighton.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Free-degree-validation-press-release.pdf>

### **Can I do a degree with you in a subject of my choice?**

No. This is not feasible as most of our volunteer teachers have other academic or teaching jobs. What we can offer is a mixed subject course based on what is offered by our volunteer teachers. However, as a group, our learners do get to select subjects they wish to study from the ones offered. If learners wish to learn other subjects, then we try to find people who can teach them. We do our best to offer learner-centred education where learners are involved in the design of the course and determine what they study and how.

### **What can learners contribute?**

Time and commitment. FUB is always looking for volunteers to help us with running and promoting the university, roles such as learning assistants, administration and marketing are open to learners. In addition, learners are absolutely central to all of the decisions made in the university and attend planning and progress meetings that are held outside of the taught sessions. In addition, we ask that learners contribute by participating in any monitoring or evaluation activities we run – this might, for example, include responding to an online questionnaire or providing a case study.