



Press Release - For immediate release

A university education with no price tag

Fancy a university education without forking out tens of thousands of pounds in tuition fees? It's possible if you live in or near Brighton & Hove.

Free University Brighton (FUB for short) offers validated, degree-level courses in Social Science and Philosophy both of which are completely free – earning them the nick-name 'Freegrees'. After running these courses successfully for three years FUB is about to enrol more students.

FUB's founder, Ali Ghanimi said: *"Anyone can study these courses, you don't need 'A' levels, just an open mind and a willingness to learn. We've designed the courses so that people who work or care for others can participate and students can pick and choose from a wide variety of subjects. Current offers include Criminology, Sociology, Political Economy, Psychology, Philosophy, Feminism, Gender & Sexuality, Politics and Development Studies. We aim to provide education that's accessible, fun, builds confidence and empowers people to improve their lives"*.

Ghanimi set up Free University Brighton in 2012 after the Coalition Government trebled tuition fees and introduced above-inflation interest rates on student loans. The move sparked student protests and occupations around the country but also a new wave of free, community-led education initiatives.

The courses are free thanks to a group of university lecturers who teach voluntarily. Many do so because they believe in FUB's ethos that education should be accessible to all and for the benefit of society. Universities used to be sites of critical inquiry but are now market-driven businesses where courses are determined by what brings in the most money.

Feedback has been positive. One student said: *"It has been my life-long dream to study at university level but finances prevented that. FUB has given me this opportunity. It has broadened my thinking and opened up my mind to other views and possibilities!"*

Another said: *"It is challenging on so many levels, and an absolutely wonderful experience!"*

Anyone who is interested can find out more from the FUB website. www.freeuniversitybrighton.org Or head along to their Open Evening from 7-9pm on Wed 11 July at the Learning Centre in the City Clean Depot on Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton BN1 7GA.

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 is run over 3 academic terms starting in September 2018. Students will typically study one session a week on weekday evenings or Saturday mornings, for around 2-3 hours.
4. Subjects covered in year 1 will include: Inequalities in Education; Crime, Inequality & Justice; Feminism, Gender & Sexuality; An Introduction to Philosophy; Development Studies; Political Economy and Sociology. Other subjects to be confirmed.
5. The registration session will take place at the Learning Centre at the City Clean depot, Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton BN1 7GA on Wednesday 11 July from 7-9pm. There will be a short film about FUB, a presentation, taster sessions, a Q&A session and people can sign up for a 'freegree' there and then, if they wish.
6. The Coalition Government trebled university tuition fees in 2012 and removed the cap on fees in 2016. Universities are now charging £9,250 – £9,500 per year and fees are likely to rise above £10,000 per year in subsequent years.
7. The interest rate on student loans was recently increased 6.3% and average level of student debt now exceeds £50,000 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.