

# Free University Brighton

Education for love, not money

## About Our Freegree Courses

Free University Brighton offers free, higher education (degree-level) courses in

- Social Science & Humanities
- Philosophy
- Feminism, Gender & Sexuality

We call these courses Freegrees as they are free! They are free from tuition fees, and free in an academic sense. Unlike other universities, we aren't pressurised to promote the ideas and ideologies of corporate sponsors and we offer education that has a social benefit rather than what brings in most income.

Here are some frequently asked questions and answers about the courses and what our current students have said about the courses.

We hope this answers some of your questions but if not, please get in touch. You can email us at [contact@freeuniversitybrighton.org](mailto:contact@freeuniversitybrighton.org)

## Who can do these courses?

Anyone can study these courses, you don't need any previous qualifications just an open mind and a willingness to learn and to share your own ideas and experiences. We've designed the courses so that people who work, care for others or have other commitments can participate.

## How does it work?

The courses are taught by volunteer tutors, typically university lecturers and academics, and we run classes in public spaces around the city that we can use for free. Because we rely on volunteers, who are often working full time, the courses are made up of modules of different subjects. Each volunteer teaches their subject over a period of weeks which is more manageable for them, but it also means students get to learn a variety of subjects. In the first year, students typically study 6-8 subject areas. In subsequent years, students get to collectively choose which subjects they learn from a range of subjects that are offered.

## **How is learning assessed?**

There are no exams. We think exams are stressful and not the best way of assessing people's abilities. We will be awarding certificates on two bases, 1) by attendance without assessment; or 2) by assessment of assignments on a pass or fail basis.

## **When and where will the classes take place?**

The classes will take place in various venues around the City. At the moment we are using the Council's Learning Centre in the City Clean depot on Upper Hollingdean Road, Brighton. We will ensure venues are wheelchair accessible and are easy to get to by public transport.

## **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 you can go to more than one class if you wish and 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 courses?**

Three to four. After year one you will receive a certificate. Year two will be equivalent to a diploma and we envisage it will take around 4 years to gain the equivalent of a degree.

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-level course, 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 passing assignments and knowing their work is of the same standard as a degree. Both are welcome and valid.

### **Are you offering degrees like other universities?**

No. FUB does not have degree awarding powers and our aim is to offer higher education courses that are genuine alternatives 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 students 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 these 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 terms of quality, what we offer 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 students.

### **Will these courses be recognised by employers?**

We can't guarantee that. However, our courses are taught by lecturers and academics working at conventional universities and our courses have been 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.

### **Can I study a course with you in a subject of my choice?**

No. Because we rely on volunteer tutors, we can only offer courses that they are willing and able to teach.

However, as a group, our students do get to select subjects they wish to study from the ones offered. If students 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 students are involved in the design of the course and determine what they study and how.

## **The Students Views**

Here's what this year's students have said about the course...

"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. Thank you!"

"It's given me a much deeper understanding of what's going on around me and how my life is connected with all these broader movements".

"It's turned my world upside down and has given me some hope for the future to know there are others who are as passionate about equality and justice".

"I feel I have been able to explore subjects in a non-exam environment, which is great".

"I've loved learning such a variety of subjects and it has really improved my confidence in my own educational abilities"

"The tutors knowledge and enthusiasm has been brilliant."

"I'm enjoying the student experience for the first time, and have made friends whom I meet outside of the classes".

"I'm much more open to ideas and critically looking at information that conflicts with my 'world view'".

"I am less anxious in groups and at the thought of being with a group of people I don't know well - this is massive for me". "It is challenging on so many levels, and an absolutely wonderful experience!"

"It's given me the confidence to state my opinions and inform others. I've also started getting involved with a homeless activist group. I'm likely to go on my first ever protest march this summer."

“This has reminded me of the joy of studying”. “It's been amazing, really good to get me through the winter when I would normally get a bit mopey”.

“The re-introduction to some quality and focused learning, from lecturers and students, has been more than I could have hoped for. Great to meet more likeminded people but from different walks of life, after seven years living in Brighton”.

“FUB is a great project and it's very exciting to be part of it.