

Introduction

Writing this, the Student Experience Report 2010, has been challenging but extremely rewarding. It gathers together the opinions of our members from a wide range of sources, and presents to the University an overview of what students would like from their time at UEA. The Union hopes that the University will act upon our recommendations which come directly from students, in order to achieve their aim of 'providing a student experience that is second to none in the UK'¹, as laid down in the Corporate Plan.

The report has been written to inform university staff about the issues students perceive to have a direct impact on their student experience. From getting feedback on exams to parking on campus, there are a range of issues which affect the experience that a student has at university. Addressing the issues raised in this report can only improve the overall satisfaction level of students, which will be reflected in future National Student Surveys. It is therefore key to ensuring that UEA retains its place in the top five universities for student satisfaction.

It is clear from the data in the National Student Survey and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, as well as individual student comments, that the standard of education and level of student experience at this University is extremely good. Indeed, one comment from the National Student Survey 2009 sums up the general feeling:

"Great lecturers, great campus, great course flexibility. Nice one."

Yet, there are always opportunities for improvement, and where we believe that the University could do even better we have presented our recommendations. Student officers and representatives look forward to working in partnership with the University to build on these improvements throughout the next year. The Union hopes that our recommendations will be acted upon, and that the actions that the University takes to address these issues be reported back to the Student Experience Committee.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of staff around the University who work with student officers and student representatives, as they seek to shape their education and the community around them.

Yours in unity,
Rachel Handforth
Academic Officer 2010
Union of UEA Students



¹ University of East Anglia Corporate Plan, 2008-12

Recommended Actions

Academic Issues

The Union of UEA Students recommends that the University:

1.1 Fees and Funding

- i) Publically oppose tuition fees for Home and EU undergraduate students, and give support for a fairer and more sustainable Higher Education funding model
- ii) Increase the funds available for bursaries, and provide more information about the funding that it offers to students, particularly to those studying abroad.

1.2 Graduate Employability

- i) Continue to help prepare graduates for their career beyond university.
- ii) Embed careers skills training into all courses.
- iii) Create opportunities for students to make connections in relevant industries and professions, with particular emphasis on humanities subjects.

1.3 Students at Work

Closely monitor the impact of paid employment during term time on students, and pay particular attention to enhancements that support working students like the earlier release of timetables, staggered assessments and an end to Saturday exams.

2.1 Teaching and Supervision

- i) Appoint a senior member of the academic division to take responsibility for students studying joint honours degrees.
- ii) More effectively organise information regarding interdisciplinary courses.
- iii) Embed study skills into course content.
- iv) Improve staff student ratios to improve contact time and academic support.

2.2 Learner Voice

Continue to work in partnership with the Union to enable students to shape their own education. A culture of effective student representation should be developed in Schools and Faculties from induction. Students should be encouraged to voice problems and Staff Student Liaison Committees should aim to create positive change.

2.3 Promptness and Quality of Feedback

- i) Ensure that modules without significant projects and dissertations meet the stated goal of a 20 working day period for the return of detailed feedback to students. However, the prompt return of coursework should not be at the expense of detailed and useful feedback.
- ii) Examine the disparity between schools on the perceived usefulness of feedback to see if best practice can be shared to improve results for NSS.

2.4 Feedback on Examinations

Introduce appropriate feedback for all pieces of assessment including exams, and move towards embedding formative assessment in all courses as previously recommended by the Union.

2.5 Marking Criteria

- i) Publish clear and concise marking criteria for each piece of assessment. The mark that a student receives should always be clearly related to these criteria.
- ii) Investigate the reasons for students with specific learning difficulties being less satisfied with the fairness of marking, and if necessary better explain the purpose and use of the sticker system.

2.6 Standard Agreement for Dissertations

Continue to encourage the adoption of the standard agreement between students and supervisors on all taught postgraduate dissertation modules, and across all four Faculties. It should also monitor its impact on postgraduate student satisfaction in future postgraduate surveys.

2.7 Additional Course Costs

Give feedback to the Union's Academic Officer about the actions being undertaken from the recommendations that the Union made last academic year about additional course costs.

2.8 Provision of Timetables and Other Information

Ensure that timetables, reading lists and placement information are published as early as reasonably possible and in an accessible way.

2.9 Library and Learning Resources

Continue to expand and enhance the electronic provision of key books and journals wherever it can. A move to extend opening hours outside of the standard 12 week semester could be considered. The library should continue to work with Schools, in particular those in the Faculty of Health.

Welfare Issues

The Union of UEA Students recommends that the University:

3.1 Community Strategy

Create a far-reaching, resourced and sustainable Community Strategy in partnership with the Union. This strategy should include such themes as promoting neighbourliness and safety.

3.2 Transport

Continue to work with local bus providers to make the case for a reliable, reasonably priced bus service, and ensure that the new Park and Ride service be as cost and time efficient to student users as is reasonably possible.

3.3 Student Support Services

Continue to invest in maximising student potential through its support services, and recognise these services as being integral to the student experience.

3.4 UEA London

Increase block-grant funding to the Union, in order to facilitate the employment of a part-time Advice & Representation worker at the University's London Study Centre, and that the University and Union review how the Union can work best for London students.