The Underclass Under Scrutiny

Frank Field hailed his work on the underclass as a piece of research "which should change the course of debate in Britain." Now Alan Buckingham, lecturer in SOC and the researcher in question, is ready to get the debate under way.

A constant buzzword in the media, 'the underclass' is far from an unproblematic term in the world of sociology, and Alan’s research has reached some hard-hitting conclusions which are likely to arouse controversy. Not only has he found empirical evidence which overturns the concept of a three-tier class system, he has also concluded from his data that "we have a passive, retreatist underclass - a group of people who have just given up." Looking to the American model of social welfare as an inspiration for the UK, Alan has come to the conclusion that "we need to have more pro-active policies. Not working should not be an option any more."

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For his ESRC-funded research, Alan used one of the most exhaustive sociological resources available in the country: a national dataset with 17,500 subjects - all of the people born in the UK in one week of 1958. Using the index of 'chronic worklessness' - when people spend a minimum of 15% of their working lives out of a job and dependent on benefits - as a primary criterion, Alan discovered that around 5.5% of the sample could be considered to be members of the underclass. This group is split evenly between women and men. It is crucial that, of that 5.5%, only 1% were of ethnic origin. This suggests that the concept of an underclass in the UK is very different to that in the USA, where, according to Alan, "the word 'underclass' is used as a synonym for dispossessed black people."

Continued on page 2.

New Sports Complex is a Runaway Success

The Chancellor opened the revamped Falmer Sports Complex in style when he tested out the fitness equipment for himself. Before his bout on the running machine, Lord Attenborough observed that the Fitness Room needed a machine especially for the over-75s. Lottery-supported body Sport England awarded the lion's share of a £1 million grant to the University’s Sports Service to carry out the improvements to the Complex, and Sport England’s Senior Regional Development Officer, Jack Wilkinson was there to celebrate the opening. A Sussex alumnus, Mr Wilkinson - or 'Wilko' as he was affectionately known - was one of the first students to graduate from the University. A keen sports player when he was here, he was a member of the University soccer team and acted as an official in intra-mural competitions. At the time, he says, "The University had almost the only, as well as the best, facilities: the rest of the world had to gradually catch up."

Brian Barnett, the Sportcentre’s Operations Manager, was one of Wilko’s main rivals in the good old days, and once clinched a match by scoring a goal from kick-off at the half way line. Now they are playing for the same team - and together with the rest of the Sports Service staff they’ve achieved a more permanent sort of goal.

The new Sports facilities are open to staff and students of the University and members of the public.

Lord Attenborough, pictured left, trying out a jogging machine in the revamped Sports Complex.
Registrar Retires

It was announced last week that the Registrar & Secretary, Barry Gooch, is to retire from the University on health grounds. The date of Barry’s retirement is to be determined and he will be on sick leave until that date.

Barry came to Sussex in January 1996 from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine where he was Secretary and Registrar. This followed a period as Academic Secretary at the University of Essex, a post he took up after 12 years at Imperial College where he started as Admissions Officer, moving eventually to Planning.

Arrangements for the advertisement of the Registrarship and interim arrangements pending a new appointment are under way, and announcements will be made as soon as possible.

The Underclass Under Scrutiny

Continued from front page.

Many sociologists have argued that even though there is a statistical group which might share the characteristic of long term unemployment, the individuals who make up that 5.5% have very little else in common which could identify them as a distinct ‘class’. Alan’s research refutes this argument. The chronically workless are more likely to have been sacked, to have gone to prison and to be single parents. The qualitative part of the dataset, which is aimed at gauging people’s attitudes, shows a common trend toward lack of motivation, lack of commitment to work and family, and general apathy.

According to Alan, "It’s quite clear that these people lack vocational skills and that they lack cognitive ability. Their situation can be seen as being caused by these factors, but it’s actually difficult to work out whether the causal factor is attitude or lack of skills."

Alan’s research also suggests that those in the 5.5% are less likely to sustain relationships. Around 50% of the men in this group hadn’t had a relationship which had lasted for more than one month in the last ten years. Of the women, around 66% are single mothers.

With his emphasis on tough solutions, Alan calls above all for realism when dealing with the problem. "I’ve been criticised for using the term ‘underclass’ because it has connotations to do with being lazy and feckless. I’m happy to give it a different name, but it doesn’t matter what you label it, the group - and the problems they bring with them - still exist."

Interested in a career in journalism?

An exciting opportunity exists for a one-year placement in the University Information Office starting in September.

Salary £13,000

We are looking for a final year student (undergraduate or postgraduate) who
• can communicate effectively
• can write clearly and succinctly
• is computer-literate
• really wants to be a journalist.

The duties of the post will include
• finding and developing stories about University activities for internal and external publication
• handling enquiries from press and public
• setting up interviews and writing press releases.

Further information can be obtained from the Career Development Unit or the Information Office in Sussex House. Tel: (67) 88384 or email: info@sussex.ac.uk

Closing date for applications: 7 May 1999.

Sussex Host to ‘State of the Arts’ Conference

A resurrection of a different sort took place on campus this Easter. The rebirth of contemporary art was top of the agenda at the third annual conference of The New Metaphysical Art group, formed by Sussex academic and poet Dr Peter Abbs with composer Jonathan Harvey and choreographer Anna Carlisle.

The theme of the conference was ‘The Arts and the Renewal of the Spirit’, with the speakers and performers exploring ways in which new metaphysical art can capture the spirituality of human experience. Performances by heavyweight composers John Taverner and Jonathan Harvey addressed the sacred and the spiritual in music.

The quest to capture a sense of the profound was further explored in live dance performances by Amanda Banks and Nathaniel Reed, a poetry reading by Michael Hamburger and a discussion hosted by artist Andrzej Jackowski.

Unhappy with the direction of contemporary art, the group’s manifesto rails against “the uncritical and endless use of parody and pastiche” and “the ironic and clever habits of postmodernists”. They backed up their radical stance with a picket of the Turner Prize in 1997, which won them both notoriety and a groundswell of support. Their beliefs also inspired such luminary figures as the late Yehudi Menuhin to become a patron.

The group’s primary commitment is to creating and exploring new forms of art, however, and their spring conference was a major forum for showcasing works which address the ‘big questions’ the group want to get to grips with. A “celebration of the living and the elemental in art today,” according to Peter, the works were “an avant garde alternative” which examined the issues which govern our existence: our feelings of love and hope, and the spiritual journeys we make.

According to Jonathan Harvey, the conference provided a unique service. He believes that music can fulfill a need which largely goes unanswered in today’s society: “States and churches no longer have the same authority as they once did. There is a spiritual crisis in the world, and metaphysical art can address it by giving people joy and enlightenment. People have to look inside themselves for the spiritual, and art can give them a map to discover their own depths.”

Neville Frederick West

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Neville West. Neville joined the University as a Lecturer in Education in 1974 after a highly successful career as a primary headteacher in East & West Sussex. He was the first person to gain first class honours in a part-time undergraduate degree course of the University - our first 'First' on the In-Service B. Ed. After early retirement, Neville continued as a nationally respected teacher and consultant on the management of primary education.
News from the University Council

- some of the main items considered by the University Council at its meeting on
19 March

Budgetary Mechanism

The Council approved recommendations from the Planning and Resources Committee concerning changes to the budget mechanism for 1999-2000, whereby funding allocations would be based on previous years', rather than projected, student numbers. The changes were intended to give budgetary units greater certainty in their planning, increase year-on-year stability and to enable firm allocations to be made earlier in the planning process.

Budget for 1999-2000

The Council received a paper on the budget for 1999-2000 and noted that the overall position was that the University had moved into a deficit of £1.8m compared to a forecast surplus of £270k for the current year. The majority of the deterioration was attributable to the loss of overseas students and to the reduction in value of the HEFCE core grant. The Council approved a number of measures intended to address this deficit, including a freeze on vacancies arising in non-academic posts funded from budgetary income. This was subject to the Vice-Chancellor having discretion to waive this restriction in exceptional cases when he considered that keeping a post vacant would not be in the University's interests. In addition non academic posts becoming vacant should be left unfilled for a minimum period of three months.

Best Value and the Public/Private Partnership

The Council considered a paper on Best Value and Public/Private Partnerships (PPP) in the light of the strong concerns expressed at the December meeting of the Senate about the need to reduce the level of support costs charged to the academic units and the need to find the most efficient means of delivering support services. The Council noted that the University has had an involvement in PPP type schemes for at least ten years including the partnerships with Kelsey Housing Association and Bradford and Northern Housing Association, the contracting out of pay-phone management, the use of Studentline and the contracting out of a number of catering services. After discussion, in which it was noted that the key test of Best Value was whether it delivered the best service for the local people, the Council agreed that the University should adopt as formal policy the use of PPP type schemes, through a Best Value market testing process, as a method of achieving necessary reductions in cost without compromising the quality of the service provided.

Tuition Fees

The Council approved a 3% increase in the level of overseas fees and agreed that a fixed fee option should be introduced for overseas students, with the fee being set slightly above the standard overseas fee, but subsequently fixed for the duration of the course. It was noted that officers were authorised to negotiate lower rates in certain circumstances and that the University would be offering overseas students the possibility of paying fees in their own currency.

Community Stadium

The Council received a report from the Estates Committee which included details of preliminary discussions regarding the proposal by Brighton & Hove Albion to site a 25,000 seat community stadium at Falmer. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Council to hold a full debate on the proposal at its July meeting by which time a number of issues surrounding the project and the University’s position in relation to it would have become clearer.

Meeting House Round-up

National Conference

The Meeting House was the venue of the National Conference of Catholic Chaplains in Higher Education last month. The conference - entitled On Holy Ground - was hosted by Father Rob Esdaile, the University's own Catholic Chaplain. More than 50 chaplains, from as far afield as Newcastle and Plymouth, met to reflect on the challenges of the Church's ministry in the university sector. Further details are available from Fr. Rob Esdaile on 098032.

Christmas Appeal 1998

Many students, staff and faculty responded to the Albanian Refugees in Kosovo Appeal raising a final total of £910. The Meeting House would like to thank everyone who contributed.

Father Richard Frost

It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death of Father Richard Frost who was Catholic Chaplain at the University from 1977 to 1983.

Prayer Vigil for Kosovo

An ecumenical vigil of prayer for peace in the Balkans will be held at the Meeting House on Wednesday 28 April at 7.30 pm. All welcome.

Miscellaneous

O'Reilly Cup Open Tennis Tournament (mixed couples) on 6 June starting at 2.00pm at the Falmer Sports Complex. Maximum of 12 couples, £3.00 per couple.

Mixed Doubles Tennis Tournaments on 12 May and 16 June starting at 5.30pm at the Falmer Sports Complex. Maximum of 12 couples, £2.50 per couple.

For more information or to register for any of the above please contact Falmer Sports Complex reception on (87)7125.

Gardner Arts Centre Freebies

Jazz fusion night with J-Life Sunday 2 May at 7.45pm. The Gardner Arts Centre has one free ticket to give away to the first 10 readers who turn up at the box office waving a copy of the Bulletin.
All in a Day’s Work

It’s not just Spring that’s brightening things up - the new undergraduate prospectus has been injecting a little colour into our lives as well. Well, quite a lot of colour. Wearing sunglasses to protect himself from the glare, Publications Officer Andrew Proctor discusses the toil involved in producing ‘the prospectus of the millennium’.

An undergraduate prospectus is a year in the making, from planning through to print. It’s pretty much the case that no sooner have we finished, we have to start all over again. At the moment, in fact, we’re starting to plan for the 2001 entry prospectus, which will be printed in March 2000. We’ve always got to think several years ahead, and that’s quite tricky sometimes.

We produce three main publications a year - the postgraduate prospectus and the study abroad prospectus both come out in late summer. There is an overlap though when we work on all three, so it gets a bit hectic around February/March time. There’s only myself and the Publications Assistant, Bryony Randall, working in the office, and there are big loadings at certain times of the year.

It does take a lot of self discipline to persevere with something you know isn’t going to be needed until many months down the line. But if you don’t knuckle down early on, the backlog of work becomes impossible. It’s very different to the kind of work I used to do on magazines. I worked in Hong Kong, mostly on travel trade magazines - and yes, I do miss the free trips a bit! On newspaper or a magazine what you do is a very small part of the whole. You might be responsible for the news pages or a couple of features, and that’s all you do. Generally, you write whatever you write, it gets thrown at the sub-editor and they totally re-write it. Then another team of people might lay it out on the page and headline it. By the time it gets to print, it’s usually very different to what you first wrote.

Here, we do all the research, much of the writing, all the commissioning for photography and graphic design, and we also do a lot of on-screen editing and layout. And of course, there’s a lot of editorial checking and double-checking, getting the facts just right. It is a long process, but I do get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing it through from start to finish. When it’s all over it’s a brilliant feeling to complete it, and that takes you through.

The prospectus has changed a lot in the last few years, moving from a handbook of the University’s courses to more of a marketing document. It also forms part of the contract between the University and its students, so we have to consider what we say very seriously. If we said that it’s always sunny in Brighton, we could be held liable for rainy days. You have to be very accurate. And you have to treat a fine line between being accessible and dumbing-down. But Higher Education is becoming more and more competitive, whether we like it or not. A lot of academics aren’t very comfortable with the marketing role, they don’t like marketing speak. But we have to find the right balance. We want to get across the dynamic nature of Sussex; its unique characteristics, and to do this we use a lot of photos, and write in a lively and engaging style. We aren’t in the business of dumbing-down, but we do want to make the prospectus approachable.

I think it’s enormously important to be aware of who you’re writing for. Magazines have a clear target audience - if you write for Sub-Aqua Monthly, you’ve got to remember who it is that’s wearing the flippers, and it’s the same with the prospectus. We run focus groups with our own students, sixth-formers and other potential applicants to try and find out what people want and need, what they respond to. When we showed people this year’s cover they were generally positive: some said it was like a club flyer or that it was wacky and futuristic. We were trying to go for a ‘new millennium’ feel, so that was good. The prospectus is serious stuff, it plays a big part in a very important decision, but you have to be aware of what’s happening out there to engage your readership. I think you have to be pretty young at heart.

Senate Elections

The Process for electing Faculty to serve on Senate from 1 August 1999 is now under way. Members of the electorate have been sent details by electronic mail. The closing date for the receipt of nominations is noon, 27 April 1999.

Nominations should be sent to Jenny Payne in Sussex House.
VC's Voice

Last week I had the pleasure of listening to a senior official concerned with higher education funding speaking about the 'regional agenda'. He started off with remarks about lifelong learning and the changing nature of higher education: more students living at home, more mature students, more part-time students. After his talk, an equally senior figure from a university (a large ex-polytechnic) said that at his institution the proportion of students who lived at home was not increasing. The next day, the Times Higher reported that mature student applications to full-time higher education continue, sadly, to decline.

The speaker had been seduced by the rhetoric of 'lifelong learning' into incorrect beliefs about easily checked facts. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated phenomenon: the government want to concentrate much of the expansion of higher education on 'sub-degree' provision. It evidently believes that this is where the demand is, though the facts show otherwise. Much of the same confusion of rhetoric and reality may surround the 'regional agenda' itself. The government has set up Regional Development Authorities, 'regional co-operation' in higher education is a good thing, so the Regions may be given a significant role in the distribution of higher education funds. We are in the South East Region, which runs from Dover to Buckingham. Our regional relationships are very important to us. We work closely with Brighton University and other partners in the Academic Corridor; we are developing a 'progression accord' with local schools and colleges to strengthen our student recruitment in East and West Sussex and in Brighton and Hove; we have partnership relationships with higher education colleges in Sussex, Croydon, Kent and London; we collaborate in biological sciences with Surrey University. In each of these cases the 'region' is different; and in none of them is it the South East Region.

The region is important to us, and the Region may become important to us. But exactly what is important has to be decided by looking at our own strengths and interests and at what is actually happening, not what some politician or policy-maker, seduced by the slickness of his (or her) own rhetoric, thinks should happen.

Similarly, taking a sceptical view of the rhetoric of 'lifelong learning' is not to dismiss the importance of the idea. Quite the contrary, This University has always had a deep commitment to lifelong learning. In the changing environment of higher education, we have to find new ways of fulfilling that commitment, ways that draw on our strengths and respond to student need. Senate at the end of last term agreed that we should pursue new initiatives in part-time degree provision. This involves much more than spreading an existing full-time degree over twice the time - part-time students have particular needs and interests. There are exciting possibilities, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and I look forward to interesting developments.

The retirement of Barry Gooch is reported in this issue of the Bulletin. Barry has had a distinguished career in university administration and he has made an enormous contribution to the University of Sussex in the short time he has been here. It is very sad that his career has been unexpectedly cut short when he still had so much to offer us. I would like to pay a personal tribute to his warmth, loyalty and wisdom from which I have benefited in my first few months as Vice-Chancellor.

I am sure that all members of the University will wish to join me in offering our warmest good wishes for the future to Barry and Julia Gooch.

Charities Get On-line for ESF Success

The so-called information super highway can be as confusing as spaghetti junction for those who aren't in the know. Researcher Niall Crowley, based in CCE, has been cutting through the web of jargon to help charities into the fast lane.

As part of a Euro-funded project, Niall compiled an internet directory of over 100 charitable groups throughout the South East with a view to helping them work together. These groups can now use the internet to get a totally up-to-the-minute picture of what other organisations might be doing, opening up opportunities for partnerships and minimising overlaps of services. The ESF only accepts bids from large organisations, so banding together will give smaller charities - for example, for the unemployed, deprived ethnic minorities and those with mental health problems - a chance at winning new funds.

Created in order to help groups bid for a slice of the lucrative European Social Fund, the directory is available on paper as well as on-line for those without internet access.

Niall's latest project is a comparative 'siesta' - called 'Sharing the Internet to Establish Systems for Training and Access', it aims to revolutionise the way that local charities tap into technology. CCE will be working in partnership with Eastbourne College, who will be offering IT training, and BT, who will act as IT consultants, to develop the project. With 200 computers to distribute, SIESTA will be setting up internet access points, on-line resources and training schemes for charitable groups, helping them to learn how to create more effective publicity and stand a better chance of winning elusive funds. As Niall says, "Many of the groups I work with feel isolated. If the Directory and SIESTA allow some of these groups to communicate and see the bigger picture, they will have been worthwhile."

Anyone who may have useful information on local organisations in East Sussex can contact Niall on ext 4313.

The Isle of Thorns Training Centre

The University's year-round training centre is located in 70 acres of grounds on the edge of the Ashdown Forest, at Chelwood Gate. It offers a perfect location for conferences, courses and meetings. University groups also benefit from a discounted rate.

Meetings for up to 50 residential or 80 non-residential delegates can be accommodated.

For further information please contact:
Paul Knight (Manager)
Tel: 01825 740283
Fax: 01825 740683
E-mail: paulk@iot.u-net.com
Close up on Research

Eschewing the theory that deviant behaviour in films leads to deviant behaviour in audiences, Dr Martin Barker has been probing the storm of outrage which erupted on the release of David Cronenberg’s film Crash. The film, adapted from JG Ballard’s novel, delves into a subculture of literal auto-erotics - people who derive sexual excitement from car crashes.

I learnt some really important things about viewing strategies from work I did on the action-adventure film Judge Dredd. When the controversy broke around Crash in 1996 I wanted to see if some of the same things applied to a so-called arthouse film. I wanted to see what academic audience research could tell us that was of relevance to policy debates.

Together with two colleagues at my former university in Bristol, I won ESRC funding to research audience reactions to Crash. There were three strands to our research - an analysis of audience responses to the film, a deconstruction of the press reaction and an investigation into the way the film was perceived differently in three countries - the UK, France and the USA.

We set up a special screening of Crash, and we recruited a wide selection of people to attend the screening, through cold calling, direct calling, speaking to specialist film groups, leaflets in video shops - anything we could think of really. 163 people came to the screening and filled in a questionnaire afterwards. From the questionnaire we were able to group them into nine categories along the two dimensions of ‘liking-disliking’ and ‘approving-disapproving’. In Britain it was clear people ran to extremes. This was also clear from the media reaction to the film. People either went for liking and approving the film or towards dislike/disapprove or dislike/neutral.

In fact, Cronenberg himself argued that the controversy about Crash was peculiarly British, and our research bore this out. In France, cinema culture sees film as a kind of organic presence. So there were quite extraordinary debates which centred on the premise that film is like a very difficult, demanding friend who will ask questions of us. Censorship was not an issue at all. And in America, the clear distinction between arthouse and mainstream film meant that the debate around Crash focused on whether it was an arthouse movie or not, and from there, whether it was any good.

In Britain, the Evening Standard set the terms of debate with its headline ‘Beyond the Bounds of Depravity’. Those who wanted to argue against this viewpoint had to find a way of denying that the film was harmful before making any other assertion. They did that almost entirely by focusing on the film as ‘cold’ - in other words, not emotionally or sensually engaging.

In the follow-up interviews we did with 65 of the people who came to the screening, this view of the film as ‘cold’ also prevailed. People could then be really antagonistic to the film without calling for it to be censored. They had certain limit conditions for censorship which the film didn’t transgress, like paedophilia or material which inculcates racist or sexist attitudes. People were sometimes very uneasy after first seeing the film, and categorised themselves as dislikers, but over a period of time they ended up saying - “You know, I’d really like to see it again. I though I didn’t like it, but I’m wondering. It’s made me think.”

By far the most significant effect of the film was that it made people go away and think about their own reaction. This is crucial, because it shows that meanings are not encoded within a film, but are in the relationship people build up with a film over time. Research too often assumes a passive audience, but we need to focus on the enthusiastic audience, those who invest heavily in a film. In fact, one of the specific recommendations we’ll be making to the British Board of Film Classification, who are interested in our research and whom we interviewed as part of it, will be to analyse people who invest heavily in a film, because then we are getting at the conditions under which it can be influential.

The ‘effects’ of a film are not to do with whether it will directly influence someone’s behaviour. I think it’s stupid to focus on whether someone is likely to go out and do what they have seen. There isn’t the slightest bit of evidence that that goes on, or that that is what films mean in people’s lives. If you want to talk about the consequences of films, you need to ask - what do people use movies for? They use them to laugh, cry, follow fantasies, have a scary experience, get involved, play imaginative games - and to dream.

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Research Funding Opportunities
Spotlight on Europe

The EU have launched the first wave of calls for the Fifth Framework Programme (1999-2002) for RTD proposals. These calls target specific research tasks across all the activities and programmes of FP5 with deadlines in June and October 1999 (dependent on research task). For more information/advice/guidance, please contact R.L.Dowsett@sussex.ac.uk or http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research/frame.html. The Commission’s Fifth Framework web page address is: www.cordis.lu/fp5.

The main areas of research addressed are:

- **Quality of Life**: Biotechnology/biomedicine/food/health/agriculture/fisheries/neurosciences/businesses/bio-ethics
- **Information Technology**
- **Competitive & Sustainable Growth**: Industrial materials/manufacturing/transport/aeronautics/marine technologies/steel/measurements and testing
- **Environment**: water/pollution/marine ecosystems/biodiversity/urban heritage/climate change/earth observation
- **Energy**: large scale generation of electricity/energy conservation/de-centralised generation/wind and solar energy/abatement technologies/storage of energy
- **International co-operation**: sustainable development/healthcare/plant & animal production/environment & industry/water resource management/conferences/short-term fellowships
- **Socio-economic research**
- **Improving Human Potential**: Post-Doc Fellowships/Marie Curie post-grad training sites/Research training networks.

The total budget for the Fifth Framework Programme is £14.96 billion euros (about £11 billion). Funding is available for collaborative research between EU countries: for research networks, fellowship grants, conferences, workshops, basic & applied research, demonstration activities and feasibility studies.

Research proposals should address EU objectives such as: promoting the competitiveness of EU industry, improving the quality of life, and reducing unemployment. The consortium must demonstrate complementarity of expertise and genuine trans-European collaborative research.

Other opportunities are available from the Research Grants and Contracts Office, contact Debbie, ext 3812 or email: D.Foy-Everett@sussex.ac.uk. For an extensive listing of funding opportunities see REFUND on the Research website on the USIS Home Page or http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research.

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Look Back for the Future

Sussex is leading the way in student development with a new scheme designed to improve students’ skills and employability. The ‘Look Back for the Future’ project - which is still in its pilot stage - has already attracted widespread attention as a model of good practice from universities and employers across the country.

Designed to encourage students to reflect on skills they have acquired through a range of extra-curricular activities, such as volunteering in the community or running sports clubs, the project aims to help them get the most out of what they already do. With the support of staff, students are encouraged to develop contacts through networking and to think about their activity in terms of how it will contribute towards a career. They fill in a detailed log on a weekly basis and attend workshops and supervision sessions. At the end of the project, they will be awarded a certificate to prove they’ve taken part.

The project partners believe that students who take part in extra-curricular activities can gain important transferable skills. According to project manager Andrea Baldwin, the scheme, which is a collaboration between several different university departments, is “unique within Higher Education; there’s nothing quite like it.” Fifty students who take part in diverse activities - from working as Residential Advisors and acting as mentors in schools to those with part-time jobs - are guinea pigs on the pilot.

It is tempting to suggest that students already know that being a Residential Advisor will look good on their CV, that this would be a primary motivation for involvement anyway, and therefore such a scheme might be superfluous. Andrea, the Students’ Union’s Student Development Worker, refutes this argument. She points out that “Research has shown there is a whole range of reasons for people to volunteer. Personal development is one identified reason, but other significant reasons are altruism and the opportunity for making new friends. Even if someone becomes a Residential Advisor purely for their CV, they may not actually know how to translate what they’re doing into the process of identifying skills.”

Andrea hopes that the pilot project, funded jointly by the DHEE/Student Training and Development in Action (STADIA) and the University’s Teaching and Learning Development Fund, “will expand until it becomes available to absolutely everybody.” She says “Employers are already starting to learn about it, and when knowledge of the project becomes widespread, they will find it valuable. It’s already exceeded my expectations in terms of recognition in the field of student development.”
Noticeboard

Lectures, Seminars, Colloquia

Monday 26 April
12.30pm SPRU Environmental Programme Brown Bag Seminar: Tom Wakeford (East London), Participation and foresight: a case study in citizen deliberation involving GM food. 2A3 Mantel Building.

2.00pm War in Yugoslavia: Open meeting on the European crisis in Kosovo in Arts Lecture Theatre A2. Hosted by International Relations and Politics Group.

4.30pm Neuroscience Seminar: Yuri Panchin (Russian Academy of Sciences), Function and reconstruction of the neuronal networks in the tetrodop mollusc, Clione. BLR.

Tuesday 27 April
2.15pm SEI Research-in-Progress Seminar: Adrian Favell, EU immigration policy after Amsterdam. A71.

4.15pm Biochemistry and Genetics & Development Seminar: Paul Curnn (UCL), Evolution of an algal light-harvesting protein (aka the 'Pink Protein'): Crystal structure of the cryptophyte phycocyanin at atomic resolution. BLR.


4.30pm Social and Political Thought Seminar: Veronica Tozzi, Past reality and multiple interpretations in historical investigation. D630. All welcome.

5.00pm Literary and Intellectual History Seminar: David Wootten (Queen Mary and Westfield), Voltaire, Candide and bureaucracy. D410.


Wednesday 28 April
5.00pm Migration Research Seminar: Adrian Favell, Multi-national, multi-cultural, multi-levelled Brussels: national and ethnic politics in the 'Capital of Europe'. A71.

Thursday 29 April
4.00pm Ep Colloquium: Steven Dakin, The visual coding of word shape. EP 3.9.

5.00pm History Work-in-Progress Seminar: Eugenio Biagini (Cambridge), Virtue and Victorianism. A155.

Friday 30 April
All day The Migration Research Centre: Stephen Castles, Workshop on research methods in migration research. Contact Russell King (EURO) for details.

11.00-3.30pm Cunliffe Centre Conference: Richard Simeon (Toronto), Constitutional change in the United Kingdom: a Canadian critique. Essex House conference room.

2.00pm SPRU Seminar: Sue Mayer (Genewatch), The GM foods furor: more than just a passing food scare. EDB LR.

4.00pm Applied Mathematics and Numerical Analysis Seminar: Qi Tang, An integral equation arising from the mutation of an asexual population. 2B13 PEV 1.

Miscellaneous


Engineering PG Poster Session: An opportunity to come and find out about current research being carried out by postgraduates in the School of Engineering. All are welcome. Wednesday 28 April 1999. 2.00 - 4.00pm 4MA4 EngII

Sport Service Events

Children's and adults' beginners' ballet: Saturday mornings (with an ex ballet mistress from the Royal Ballet), starting 24 April.

New this term: Street Dance Taster Session Tuesday 22 April 5.00-6.00pm only. Street Dance course will continue at the same time the following week for 8 weeks. Cost £17.50.

Supercircuits: An 8 week course for serious circuit and fitness enthusiasts. Starting Friday 30 April.

Next back care course: Tuesday 11 May from 6.30-9.00pm.

For further details for all of the above please contact the Sportcentre reception on 678228.

Small Ads

Small Ads are placed free of charge. We will always try to display them in the earliest edition but cannot guarantee this. Please help by limiting them to 20 words or less.

FOR SALE: 3 bedroomed house, lounge with fireplace, GCH, new boiler, patio garden, university 1 mile, ideal for letting, £49,950. Tel 474738 (after 2.00pm).

TO LET: Room in private house, with use of kitchen. All bills (excluding phone) incl. 5 mins from Preston Park station in a quiet neighbourhood. £600. Contact Scott on 01903 700800 (day), 542239 (eve).

AVAILABLE: French girl, aged 17, sister of a member of faculty, good education, reasonable English, experience with children, non-smoker, seeks post as 'au pair' for July and/or August. Live in or out. Brighton/Hove/Lewes area. Please contact Magali Faure on 0727655 or email M.C.Faure@sussex.ac.uk.

WANTED: Accommodation required for two weeks, for visiting Professor from India, from 5 May till 21 May 99, small flat, for self and wife, with attached kitchen / facilities. Please contact ext. 8681 or 8871.

TO LET: Pleasent studio flat available in Lewes from April 26 - May 20. Quiet road, convenient for shops, garden, own front door. Tel. 476813.

AVAILABLE: Painting and decorating, by very experienced mature student. Tel 698719.

TO LET: Summer let in lovely two-bedroomed flat, Seven Dials, sharing with young, easygoing, female member of staff. £65 p/w. Would prefer female; immature postgrad/staff, or 'mature' student! Available June-September, poss longer. Tel. Sally, ext. 4535 (day) or 732025 (eve).

TO LET: Lewes (Malling area), 3 bedroom terraced house, GCH, furnished, in good decorative order (No Pets), rental £600 pcm, for further details, tel: 478468 or 475079.

TO LET: 3 bedroom house in Fivesways area of Brighton from mid-May onwards for an initial period of three months. Contact Michael on gasiorek@romarin.univ-aix.fr or tel: 003 442668296.

WANTED: I would like to find a Native Spanish speaker in Spain or in UK with Spanish links, with good English to help with personal Genealogy research. Can anyone point me in the right direction? Please contact Cathy Middleton by e-mail cathy@dataloader.demon.co.uk.


WANTED: Research fellow looking for 2 b/room flat or house in Hove (preferably) or Brighton area. From end of June to Dec 1999 (though flexible with regards to earlier move). Please contact David on 877081 or e-mail: dsmith@biols.susx.ac.uk.

WANTED: Newly appointed lecturer (partner with two children) seeks 3 bedroom house for let in Brighton/Hove, from August or September 1. Proximity to schools a major consideration. Please email sthomas@chass.utoronto.ca.

FOR SALE: Apple Mac Performa 6320 24mb RAM, 1.6 GB Hard drive, colour, stereo speakers, CD Rom, Software, Manuals and stylewriter 1200 inkjet printer. £400 o.n.o. Satinwood computer unit, cost £150 as new, will take £40. Tel:883 892 or JudyB@IDS.ac.uk.

TO LET: 2 bedsits, £53 and £42, no bills, no deposit, own transport essential, 10 mins from Uni. Tel. 483395 (day), 858509 (eve).

FOR SALE: 1410 Video Monitor Tester, £484 as new, will accept £200 ono. Offers to Sean Scott 01444 243028.

Bulletin

The Bulletin appears every Friday during term time with copy deadlines the preceding Friday lunchtime. We welcome any suggestions for news, events, letters and small ads from staff and students of the University. Please contact the Information Office in Sussex House on Ext. 8209 or Email: Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.
Student Occupation of Sussex House

Last Tuesday afternoon, 27 April, a group of students left a Students' Union General Meeting in Falmer House and forcibly entered Sussex House. The students took occupation of the foyer, financial accounts offices and the student loans office on the first floor of the building. The occupied area also contained the Information and Payroll offices, although the students did not gain entry to those offices.

The Vice-Chancellor offered to talk to the occupiers. It appeared, however, that they were operating as a collective and did not wish to elect spokespersons or negotiators and there was no response to the offer to talk. Instead they issued two written demands: that no present or future student would be expelled for non-payment of tuition fees and that there would be no repercussions for anybody involved in the occupation.

On Wednesday, the Vice-Chancellor sent a letter to all students and staff notifying them that a part of Sussex House had been occupied and setting out the University's position on the collection of tuition fees. Along with every other higher education institution, Sussex has no choice but to charge these fees to its students, but it tries to operate the arrangements in a fair and reasonable manner. It was emphasised that no student who is unable to pay fees because of financial difficulties would be deregistered.

One issue which rapidly emerged was that the students' action was affecting the work of the offices which are responsible for, among other things, the distribution of student grant cheques. On Wednesday afternoon, the Vice-Chancellor received a phone call from one of the occupiers and it was agreed that he would be available in his office to talk to members of the occupation about the issue of grant cheques and what might be done by the University to alleviate the immediate financial hardship clearly being faced by students. No-one arrived. Instead, at the end of the afternoon, the occupiers presented the Vice-Chancellor with a letter containing the following proposal:

"The occupiers agree to allow one member of University of Sussex staff to enter the occupied area of Sussex House in order to remove only the grant cheques, so that they might be distributed to students elsewhere."

It further stated that "if the University of Sussex Administration and the Vice Chancellor refuse to accept this reasonable demand brought forward to help all students receive their cheques, we are clearly no longer responsible for the unavailability of grant cheques."

On Thursday morning, the University was granted a possession order by Brighton County Court. There followed another court hearing when the occupiers appealed for a stay of execution and leave to appeal to the High Court against the possession order. This was refused, and in the afternoon, bailiffs came onto campus with warrants to put the Court order
into effect. This they were unable to do as the students refused to talk to them.

On Friday an amnesty was offered to the occupiers. This stated that no disciplinary action would be taken against anyone involved in the occupation provided they left the building by 5.00 pm that day and provided that there was no significant loss or damage to University property. After 5 pm a bailiff, accompanied by police again attended the University to explain to the occupiers the legal position and the roles of the bailiffs and the police. The occupiers again refused to speak to the Vice-Chancellor or the bailiff.

The Vice-Chancellor then talked to the groups of students on the lawn outside Sussex House about the legal position and about the University policy on student funding. A small group of students remained inside the building and refused to engage in any discussion.

Because of the scale of the occupation at that time, and because the occupiers had refused to leave peacefully, it was decided that the possession order should be transferred from the County Court to the High Court. This meant that responsibility for enforcement of the order passed from the Bailiffs to the Sheriff's office and the University was duly issued with a writ of possession.

The occupation continued over the Bank Holiday weekend.

When the University reopened on Tuesday, the University initiated discussions about the possibility of issuing grant cheques. The Vice Chancellor met three representatives of the students occupying Sussex House; the President of the Students' Union, Becca Holyhead was also present at the discussion. The tone of the discussion was friendly and constructive. It was made clear, and appeared to be accepted, that the initial condition laid down by the occupiers that one member of staff only would be allowed into the occupied area in order to remove the grant cheques was unworkable. The University would be prepared to try to set up an alternative system for distributing grant cheques and hardship funds during the occupation, but for this to happen, it would be necessary for a number of staff to have access to all of the occupied offices. Experienced staff were needed to identify what material would be needed and a sufficient number of staff was required to remove the large volume of material.

The students involved in the discussion agreed to convey this information to their fellow-occupiers and respond the next day. Around mid-morning on Wednesday, the occupiers issued a letter stating that the number of University staff they would allow into the occupied areas should be restricted to two; entrance should be via the rear window, access should be restricted to one room only and the time allowed for locating and removing material would be limited to 30 minutes.

The Vice-Chancellor wrote back to the students, expressing his disappointment that, after what had appeared to be a reasonable discussion, they had come forward with an offer which was unacceptable, not least because it was entirely impracticable. He reiterated that the material needed for setting up alternative operations was located in a number of offices throughout the occupied areas; two members of staff alone would be unable to identify and remove all the material required and that 30 minutes was not sufficient for the task to be properly carried out.

According to the Finance and Business Director Steve Pavey, the distribution of grant cheques will be the number one priority for the administration as soon as the building is repossessed. Meanwhile because the occupation is now in its second week, contingency plans to restore some financial services have been put in place, insofar as this is possible. These are however, very limited and the range of services, detailed in the letter from the Vice-Chancellor to all staff and students yesterday, continue to be disrupted. In addition, students submitting assessments will be experiencing some inconvenience because of the restrictions on access to Sussex House. However, submission deadlines are being maintained.

Whilst the occupation lasts, information will continue to appear daily on the University home page and the financial helpline will continue in operation. The number to ring for urgent financial enquiries is (67) 8692. The position regarding the re-possessing of Sussex House is that enforcement of the writ of possession is the responsibility of the Sherriff's officers and the timing and scale of that operation is in their hands.