Sussex faces up to tough decisions on spending

The University is facing up to some tough decisions over the coming months as it looks to reduce planned spending by £3–4m from its £100m annual budget. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, wrote to all staff at Sussex last week (Thursday 25 November) to give them the news.

The Vice-Chancellor called on the University to tackle this challenge by "working together in a co-operative spirit". Professor Smith said, "If we can do this, we should be confident that the University will emerge strengthened academically, organisationally and financially from the process."

The University had already chosen to run a significant deficit this year to allow for extra investment in new academic posts and services to students. Sussex has also pressed ahead with building work to upgrade and improve campus facilities. That approach was seen by the University's governing body as a sensible and prudent way to continue to strengthen Sussex.

However, deficits are now running at a much higher level than planned. The scale of the challenge has become clear as final accounts for last year were prepared and as finance managers looked to budgets over future years. Those show that in 2003–04 Sussex spent £4m more than it earned, and the overspend this year will be £3m.

The University's finance committee agreed at its termly meeting on 23 November that Sussex should aim to reduce planned spending by £3m in 2005–06 and by £4m in future years. That should provide room for continued investment in posts and in developing the campus, and ensure Sussex is in good financial shape to spend new fee income wisely in the future.

Senior managers are keen to stress that there is no predetermined list of areas where savings should be achieved. The Vice-Chancellor said: "It is managers and staff across schools and in the administration who know best where savings can be achieved. We want to work within school and units and across the University as a whole to identify the right ways forward."

Staff numbers will have to be reduced if spending is to be held back. The 2,200 staff employed by Sussex represent at least 60% of the University's costs. Staff have been told that a voluntary redundancy scheme will probably need to operate, but that the University hopes to avoid any compulsory redundancies.

Campus trades unions were briefed by Barbara Bush, the Director of Human Resources, before the message was sent to all staff. Barbara said: "We hope that we can work with the unions to address this challenge together."

As the Bulletin went to print, an open meeting was planned with support staff in the schools for today (3 December). A suggestions scheme is being put in place, to encourage all staff to put forward ideas.

Senior managers aim to keep staff fully informed and engaged in the process. Further information and briefing can be found at www.sussex.ac.uk/finance/position.

Action on student numbers

As the first term of the academic year draws to a close, a mixed picture is emerging with regard to student numbers for 2004–05.

On the positive side, the intake of 'home' undergraduates from the European Union went very much to plan and the quality of 2004 entrants is higher than ever before.

The intake of overseas undergraduates, however, is much lower than was expected, based on the number of applications and acceptances received. Owen Richards, Academic Registrar, describes the numbers as "very disappointing".

The number of taught home postgraduates is also down on last year, by 7%. Taught overseas postgraduates are up slightly, by about 1%, but a bigger increase had been expected based on the pattern of growth in recent years and high numbers of accepted offers this year.

Finally, the number of research students has dropped this year, both from the UK (down 12%) and abroad (down 28%).

There are indications that Sussex is falling into a national pattern where overseas recruitment is concerned. According to Owen, the figures suggest a combination of three factors: a sharp increase in overseas students applying to several universities across the globe via the internet; economic fluctuations related to the weakness of the US dollar and the fact that many currencies are pegged to it; and chronic problems in relation to the issuing of UK visas.

Admissions staff are looking to see what they can learn at a national level. "But mainly," Owen says, "we are focusing on what we can do better at Sussex." As a result, staff from the International and Study Abroad Office and from the Postgraduate Office will be having a series of meetings with academic departments in the new year to identify possible improvements.

In addition, there is a recognition that planning projections of student numbers need to be reviewed so that they are more realistic in future: the only category where the University has met its own targets for 2004–05 is home undergraduate students.

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University Christmas card and a range of cakes now available.
BOOKMARK


The publisher says: "Pharmacogenetics, the use of genetic testing to prescribe and develop drugs, has been hailed as a revolutionary development for the pharmaceutical industry and modern medicine. Supporters of 'personalised medicine' claim the result will be safer, cheaper, more effective drugs, and their arguments are beginning to influence policy debates.

"Based on interviews with clinicians, researchers, regulators and company representatives, this book explores the impact of pharmacogenetics on clinical practice, following two cases of 'personalised medicine' as they make their way from the laboratory to the clinic. It highlights the significant differences between the views of supporters of pharmacogenetics in industry and those who use the technology at the clinical 'coal face'.

"Theoretically, this work builds on the developing area of the sociology of socio-technical expectations, highlighting the way in which promoters of new technologies build expectations around it, through citation and the creation of technological visions."

Alan Sinfield (Professor of English) Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain Continuum Impacts, £9.99 (paper) ISBN 082647702X

The publisher says: "It offers a provocative and brilliant account of political change since 1945 and how such change shaped the cultural output of our time. It also looks at how and when literature intersects with other cultural forms, and the growth of American cultural dominance. This edition includes a new foreword by the author."

Farhana Yamin (Fellow, IDS), and J. Depledge The International Climate Change Regime: A guide to rules, institutions and procedures Cambridge, £24.99 (paper)

The publisher says: "A comprehensive, authoritative and independent account of the rules, institutions and procedures governing the international climate change regime."

"Its detailed yet user-friendly description and analysis covers the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and all decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties up to 2003, including the landmark Marrakesh Accords. Mitigation commitments, adaptation, the flexibilities mechanisms, reporting and review, compliance, education and public awareness, technology transfer, financial assistance and climate research are just some of the areas that are reviewed.

"The book also explains how the regime works, including a discussion of its political coalitions, institutional structure, negotiation process, administrative base, and linkages with other international regimes.

"In short, this book is the only current work that covers all areas of the climate change regime in such depth, yet in such a uniquely accessible and objective way."

Scientist invents a simpler alternative to algebra

A simpler alternative to algebra for solving maths and science problems has been invented by a Sussex cognitive scientist. The system can also be used to sort out mathematical headaches in the real world, such as staff rosters and exam scheduling.

Professor Peter Cheng's diagrammatic approach has already been tested in schools and has proved to be easier than the traditional method involving a blizzard of algebraic formulae.

It takes just a couple of hours to learn the principles of Peter's diagrams. They aim to illuminate understanding by tapping into the natural visual and geometric reasoning that all students possess. His research, which involved presenting A level students with electric circuit problems, showed that those who used his approach were more likely to arrive at the right answers than those who employed traditional algebra.

"Algebra is a fundamental part of maths, but its difficulty is that it is very abstract," points out Peter. "Students find it hard to relate the formulae to the problems they are trying to solve. As a result, they often get lost in their calculations and resort to informal verbal reasoning."

His diagrams, which, for example, convert an electric circuit of light bulbs into boxes that are assembled like building blocks to demonstrate different properties of the circuit, were inspired by the geometric designs of early scientists such as Galileo.

"Before algebra was fully developed, diagrams were used to make some of the great science discoveries," says Peter. "I'm not suggesting this should replace algebra, which is a very valuable method for more advanced mathematical problems. But for GCSE level, this is a sufficient problem-solving tool. I would like to see it incorporated into the science and maths syllabi for school children."

Peter has now extended the approach to solving problems in the real world - such as staff rosters and examination scheduling.

"Organising staff rosters can be a nightmare," he says. "You might, for example, need to take into account not only how to ensure you have enough cover for all the shifts, but you need to work out whether you have sufficiently qualified staff at the appropriate times - and make allowances for sickness and days off.

"Although there are sophisticated computer programs available for organising these things, it is hard to make alterations in the final versions without messing up the whole thing. With the diagrammatic method, we have found a way to build on the automated process and humanise them."

Grant wins for novel projects

Scientists in the Informatics and Biology departments have been awarded two major grants from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Only seven out of 35 bids were successful and Sussex researchers are involved in two of those seven.

The EPSRC's Novel Computation Initiative was set up to bring together researchers across the engineering, physical and life sciences with the aims of advancing understanding and application of how alternative systems may organise and process complex, dynamic and uncertain information.

One group of Sussex researchers, led by Dr Ezequiel Di Paolo (Informatics), will receive £520,000 as part of a £1.4 million collaboration with Leeds University and University College London. They will be addressing the transition from IT systems comprising relatively isolated computational elements to large-scale, massively interconnected systems (such as air-traffic control).

In addition, Professors Phil Husbands (Informatics) and Michael O'Shea (Biology) have been granted £500,000 as part of a £1.2 million collaboration with the University of West of England and Leeds University to work on non-linear media computing.

These successes come close on the heels of a further EPSRC award of £530,000 to Professors Tom Collett (Biology) and Phil Husbands to study insect-like rapid visual learning algorithms.
Freshers win film frenzy

Just eight weeks after joining Sussex, a group of first year students has been crowned victorious at the inaugural 36 Hour Film Rush. Their spoils included the chance to see their film on the big screen at the UGC Brighton Marina.

The team was one of 11 who entered the fast-paced competition, which was backed by the School of Humanities, the Gardner Arts Centre and the Cinecity film festival. Teams turned up at the Gardner Arts Centre at 8am on 27 November with the aim of having a finished movie ready to screen 36 hours later.

The team of freshers were shocked at their success. "We were on the verge of giving up numerous times," recalls Jonny Burstow. "It was only the fact we'd paid £15 and didn't want to be left out that we carried on. We're all totally overwhelmed."

Jonny and his teammates – Mark Bird, Witold Chmielewski, Callum Rumble and Karen Somerville – won the Rush with a film that focused on two men discussing their relationships with the aid of a vibrator.

The students were given the vibrator as a prop and were allocated an underground car park as a location. They came up with a mini masterpiece that won a jury consisting of, among others, broadcaster Simon Fanshawe and Dean of Humanities Dr Stephen Burman.

Jonny says the prop ended up being a mysterious object used throughout the film: "A female character drops it at the start but you’re not sure whether it's a mobile phone or diary, until at the end it’s revealed that it’s her dildo."

Media Production tutor Lee Gooding, one of the staff behind the Rush, describes the winning film as having "a very cinematic feel". He adds: "It was all hand held and reminiscent of 'Fight Club."

However, it was another movie that won the popular vote. American Studies student Amelia Butterfly and her team caught the audience's imagination with their film that had the even less exciting prop of a sticking plaster, and was set in the location of Preston Park. The team created a surreal 'Chris Morris-esque documentary about the sub-culture of plasters,' as Lee describes it.

With facilities such as editing suites available for the students 24 hours a day, what was it like for staff in the Media and Film department? "We were concerned about how it was going to go, but in the end we really enjoyed it," says Lee. "It was a bit manic in the last hour, though," he confides.

Lee and his colleagues, Paul Vincent and Lon Wright, were so impressed with the quality of those who took part that next year they hope to make the event even bigger. Meanwhile the victorious team are setting their sights even higher: "Give us 36 weeks and we'll make an Oscar winner," says Jonny.
A blended approach to e-learning at Sussex

Consultation on a campus-wide e-learning strategy was launched last week at the annual conference organised by the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU).

“We have come to a turning point with e-learning at Sussex,” said Ley Robinson and Dr Julie Coultas, who are working with Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr Rose Luckin to develop the strategy. “There have been many excellent examples, over the past 10 years, of innovative courses using learning technologies to enhance their delivery in some way.

“However, at an institutional level, development in this area has largely been unco-ordinated and ad hoc. A number of factors are now forcing us to urgently re-assess this situation and take a strategic and unified approach to planning.”

So this term academic faculty, support staff and students are being consulted through questionnaires, focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

An online questionnaire will go live in February, inviting all staff to say what they want from an e-learning strategy. There is already a weblog (http://elearningatsussex.blogspot.com/) where you can have your say on the strategy as it develops.

Through the consultation process a detailed strategy will be developed, incorporating a vision for what is known as ‘blended e-learning’ (i.e. the most appropriate mix of face-to-face and e-learning) at Sussex.

The strategy will also have to be integrated with the overall teaching and learning strategy, the IT strategy and developments on Sussex Direct (the personalised online gateway to University Information).

The final version of the e-learning strategy is due in June 2005. For a detailed timetable and other information, see www.sussex.ac.uk/tldu/1-2-9.html.

Dr Lynne Murphy (Linguistics)  
Online support for finalists

For the last two years, Linguistics undergraduates writing their final-year dissertation have had support from a purpose-built web page, with links to course documents, libraries, bibliographies and other materials.

There’s also a discussion board, where the students can post suggestions and questions. If one student asks a question, Lynne can answer it to the benefit of all of them.

The students have a classroom session at the start of the year to show them how to use the site. They can then access the online information in their own time, when they decide they need help.

To set up the online support, Lynne got in touch with Ley Robinson in the TLDU. "It's so easy," she says, "I have never created my own website, but I can do this."

Dr Alison Pike (Psychology)  
Electronic assessment for large groups

The merger of three psychology subject groups into a single department in August 2003 brought with it a new curriculum structure and rationalization of teaching, which in turn tripled the size of 2nd year ‘core’ psychology courses. As a result, Alison and her colleagues decided to re-think teaching delivery and assessment for a course in spring 2004.

Lecturers provided online assessment materials that encouraged students to engage with the lecture content and read assigned material throughout the course.

A key feature was the use of online multiple-choice quizzes, which provided on-going feedback on students' understanding of the course content. Individual students' quiz results were sent automatically to their tutor's email address.

About two-thirds of the students completed the online quizzes and 93% found them useful, quite useful, or extremely useful.

Research project peruses the Ouse

A major new interdisciplinary research project was launched last month at a symposium organized by the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE).

The aim of this five-year project is to integrate research into an interdisciplinary account of the history, current state and possible futures of the valley of the river Ouse, which flows from the High Weald down to Newhaven on the coast.

Contributions to the project will be made by archaeologists, local historians, oral historians, industrial archaeologists, physical geographers, geologists, ecologists and conservationists.

There will be scope for students in CCE to contribute through their project work on award-bearing programmes and postgraduate studies.

Papers at the inaugural symposium on 20 November presented existing knowledge, work in progress and ideas for further investigation.

Dr Al Thomson, for example, described the archive of 20th-century Sussex rural life that has been amassed via the Ouse Valley Oral History Project. From 1996 Sussex students taking oral history courses developed their interview skills by recording the life histories of men and women who lived and worked in the valley.

Professor Peter Drewett, the new Professor of Archaeology in CCE, outlined the overall scope of the project. Other Sussex researchers who gave presentations included Richard Chapman, who spoke on sediment movement and accumulation in the Ouse estuary.
University sells Holland House

More than 100 undergraduates are continuing to live in a large student residence near Hove seafront, despite its sale this term by the University.

The purchasers who bought Holland House in October have leased it back to the University for five years in the first instance, so that students can continue to live there while replacement housing is being built on campus.

In fact, the University is continuing to invest in the property. As an example, in the near future IT Services will wire Holland House up to the University's 'roaming network', which allows users to connect their computers to the internet.

So if Sussex students are continuing to live in the building, why has it been sold? Charles Dudley, Director of Student Services, explains that it has long been part of the housing strategy to sell off ageing, city-centre properties including this one.

"The block has high maintenance costs (some of which will now be borne by the new owners) and it's in a conservation area, which constrains what we can do with it. And we think we've caught the property market at the right time by selling it now."

The sale realised almost £3m, of which £2.45m is profit. Some of the proceeds will be used for the University’s capital programme of building developments on campus.

Construction work will begin in February 2005 on a new residential building across the road from Brabham House, for completion by the start of the academic year 2006–07. The new accommodation will house 232 study bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms. There will also be a common room and social space.

In the meantime, student life goes on in Holland House. The residents’ tenancy contracts are unaltered since the sale; there has been no change in the management and staff team. As building manager Su Balcombe says: "Life goes on as before; there is no difference and students are unaffected."

New design for proposed car park extension

A modified design for the proposed EDB car park extension will be discussed with Creche staff and parents at a meeting on Tuesday (7 December). Work has been on hold since mid October when parents raised safety concerns about the plans and a student sought an injunction to stop the works going ahead.

The University has also commissioned an independent risk assessment by a national construction consultancy that specialises in health and safety work. That report, which will also be presented to the meeting, suggests that the original plan meets all health and safety requirements.

But the University is not resting on that report. David Kirkwood, Director of Estates, believes the alternative design will show that Sussex is responding positively to concerns expressed by parents. David said, "We have been looking seriously at ways in which we can modify the original design. I very much hope these revised plans provide a positive way forward."

The extension would replace some of the parking spaces lost in creating a new teaching building and student residences across the road from Bramber House.

Don't worry: slope will be restored

The whole of East Slope downhill given over to tarmac? 1,200 new parking spaces leased to Brighton and Hove Albion? New residences built and run for private gain?

Preparatory works to move car parks up the slope opposite Brabham House – making way for a new teaching building and residences – have given rise to a campus full of myths and rumours.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, met students in Mandela Hall on 24 November to try to calm fears to which the massive earthworks have given rise. Students used to the joy of looking out over green downhill behind East Slope flats had begun to worry that they would in future be staring at ranks of cars and tarmac. Not so, said the Vice-Chancellor.

The car parks themselves will actually be confined to the area between East Slope and Mantell Building. But, as an environmental measure, all the chalk and earth that has been dug out for the works is being retained on site. The topsoil has been removed from the rest of the hillside so that tonnes of spoil can be spread out over it. This will then be carefully compacted down; the top soil will be replaced; and the whole area will be reseeded with native grasses and flowers.

Martin Green, Head of Projects and Development, said: "It's ironic that, because Sussex is taking the most environmentally friendly approach and not dumping stuff in landfill off campus, the current hillside looks like a wasteland. Our briefing to the campus community warned that the area would be an eyesore, but it was hard to prepare people for the full reality."

Sadly, students will have to stay off the grass for one summer. It will take some time for the downhill to be restored, but students can look forward to relaxing there in future.

(Just for the record: Sussex is not building thousands of new car park spaces to lease to local football clubs. Nor will the new residences by Bramber House be run by a private company.)
Lecture celebrates Astronomy Centre's founder

A lecture this month celebrates 100 years since the birth of Professor Sir William (Bill) McCrea, founding professor of the Astronomy Centre in 1965 and director until his retirement seven years later.

Professor John Barrow from Cambridge University will mark the centenary on 13 December with a look at some of the unusual universes that cosmologists have discovered over the last 90 years.

Before the lecture, science writer John Gribbin will give a short appreciation of his former supervisor. John was in the first class to graduate from the MSc in Astronomy, which Bill was closely involved in starting and which has produced 284 graduates to date.

Bill's retirement in 1972 did not mark any change in activity. He continued to write on astronomy until he was well into his 80s and was to be seen in the Astronomy Centre on most days, especially at seminars.

He made frequent visits overseas, often under the auspices of the British Council or the Royal Society, and was the first British scientist to visit Argentina after the 1982 Falklands war, to restore scientific relations.

Despite increasing blindness, Bill kept coming in to the University until he was in his 90s. He died in 1999 at the age of 94.

During his retirement, Bill was knighted and was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society as well as many honorary degrees, including one from Sussex in 1978.

* There will be a free drinks reception at 5.30pm on 13 December in the BMSM foyer, before the lecture begins at 6.30pm in the BMSM lecture theatre.

Memories of Bill McCrea

"Bill was one of the outstanding 20th-century scientists in mathematical astronomy. He knew and worked with some of the greatest scientists of our time including Jeans, Fowler, Dirac and Eddington. As I understand it Bill never met Albert Einstein but he did have some communication with him and I remember reading Bill's foreword to Einstein's book The Meaning of Relativity when I was studying for my first degree. Bill was a link with the scientific giants of our past."

Dr Jonathan Hare

"In the early 1970s, one of Bill's research students asked him to explain a technicality in a paper Bill had written in the 1950s. Apparently Bill went to his filing system, brought out the paper, started to read it and said, "I must have been good in those days - I don't understand it, either!"

Professor Sir Harry Kroto

Research

The University has subscribed to a UK-based online web service to assist academic faculty in searching for research funding opportunities. The service is available at www.researchfunding.com.

With a personal user name and password, you can access all of the functions and options, such as browsing, searching and setting up customised email alerts. This can be done from your desk or from your home computer.

If you are a member of staff and have not yet received your user name and password, contact your Research Support Officer.

In the meantime, the Research and Regional Development Division are offering drop-in workshops to show you how to get the most out of the service. These are every lunchhour (1 - 2pm) from Monday through to Friday, 13 – 17 December, in Sussex House. Email Vivienne Seymour (v.seymour@sussex.ac.uk) to reserve a place, or drop in on the day (but you may find places filled).

New online form for room bookings

The online page to request ad hoc room bookings will be replaced this month by a system that gives users a new interface.

This new system will be a major step forward as it allows users some choice of which room to request (subject to availability) and to find the best fit for their specific requirements.

The Online Room Bookings System (ORBSS) allows users to search for rooms that are available at a specified time on a specified date. Users can also specify further requirements such as a particular building, the capacity of the room, and facilities such as a blackboard or overhead projector.

Rooms booked less than 72 hours prior to the date/time required will be confirmed by the system immediately. For bookings made more than 72 hours before the room is required, a confirmation email will be issued once the booking is successfully allocated.

You will be able to find the new system in the same place as the current system (www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/sso/table/roombook.shtml) and instructions are included on the first page once you've logged in.

Obituary

Victor Guinnane (1924 – 2004)

Victor Guinnane, aged 80, passed away peacefully on 14 November at home after a short illness. He was employed as a porter in Sussex House from 1977, then in 1979 transferred to the School of Mathematical and Physical Science, where he worked as a stores technician until he retired in 1990. Vic was very popular with stores customers and work colleagues, who have fond memories of him, particularly at Christmas parties.
MP seeks a science formula for success at Sussex

Scientist and politician Des Turner MP sampled a little bit of culture during a recent campus visit – by growing some in a Petri dish.

Biochemist and botanist Dr Turner, described as “one of the most highly qualified of Labour’s 1997 intake”, tried his hand at some experiments, including growing yeast cultures, when he joined Dr Paula Clements at the Genome Damage and Stability Centre on a visit last Friday (26 November). The Centre carries out cutting-edge research into DNA damage and repair and genetic links to cancer and other human diseases.

Dr Turner, Labour’s member for Brighton Kemptown, was originally paired with Paula as part of a Royal Society-sponsored scheme to pair the country’s best research scientists with MPs.

This involved a week at Westminster for the scientists and time in the lab for the MPs, to help give scientists a better understanding of how science policy is formed and to build better links between scientists and politicians. Commitments abroad prevented Paula from taking part in the official week, but she and Dr Turner decided to arrange a separate couple of visits.

Paula spent two days in Parliament, where she watched Tony Blair in debate during Prime Minister’s Question Time in the House of Commons and met the government’s Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir David King. She then played host to Dr Turner, who renewed old acquaintance with the Bunsen burners and test tubes of his academic days.

Paula is a research fellow in the lab of Dr Keith Cailedeott at the Genome Centre, where she is carrying out research into the rare genetic neurodegenerative disease AO1 and its links to DNA repair.

She said: “The scheme has been a unique opportunity to gain a fantastic insight into the workings of the government, particularly how scientific research is integrated into political thought. It was good to be able to show Dr Turner what my research into genetic diseases involves.”

Dr Turner has been a leading member of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, which has reported on issues such as the National Cancer Plan, human genetics and embryology, and government expenditure on research and development.

He said: “It was interesting to get back to the bench. After many years, the rust was extremely thick, but to get my hands on a little leading-edge genetic research was great fun for me.”

Sussex turns red for World AIDS Day

Many staff and students wore something red to show their support for World AIDS Day on Wednesday (1 December). A packed day of events marked this year’s theme of women and HIV.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Alasdair Smith said: “The University community can lead the way in raising awareness of HIV/AIDS. It is very important that such work continues so that the threat of HIV/AIDS is tackled both globally and locally.”

Across campus large banners were hung and trees were covered in red fabric, while student societies ran stalls about HIV/AIDS throughout the day in Library Square. As daylight faded, candles were placed near the Library to form a glowing ribbon, the international symbol of AIDS awareness. In the evening East Slope Bar turned red for a night of events, including a sexual health pub and a raffle.

The events were organised by UNISEX, the sexual health and drug/alcohol service for staff and students at Sussex and Brighton, in association with a number of campus student groups.

LETTERS

Poppy Appeal

I am writing to thank everyone on campus who contributed in any way to the recent Poppy Appeal. I have pleasure in reporting that the collection was up on the previous year: you and the villages of Falmer and Stannler raised the magnificent sum of £930.95.

If you don’t usually have a collection tin, I am more than happy to accommodate you next year: just phone me (during office hours) on 644048.

Mrs D. George
Honorary Organiser,
Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

Festive fare

Catering Services have launched a range of handmade cakes to celebrate Christmas.

Each cake is crafted by the University’s Chef de Patisserie Gemma McFarlane (pictured back) and her assistant Julia Davies (front), who were previously responsible for the West Pier cake presented to the Chancellor, Lord (Richard) Attenborough, on his 80th birthday.

The traditional fruit cakes are enveloped with thick icing and feature a variety of tableaux from angels to stained-glass windows, from Santa to snowmen.

Because of the skills involved in making these cakes, only a limited number are available. Prices begin at £12.75. Contact Catering Services on ext. 8221 for more information.

Twinkle, twinkle little card

A festive twist to the University’s new visual identity is the theme of this year’s Christmas card.

The ‘us’ marquee is filled with twinkling lights and set upon the University’s signature firt background. The Vice Chancellor’s Office and International and Study Abroad Office have already ordered copies. If other units or departments would like to send some out, the cost will be 70p per card. Copies can be ordered from Christine Anthony on Sussex House reception, just call ext. 8888 or email c.m.anthony@sussex.ac.uk.

Individual cards will be also be on sale at the Bookshop in Bramber House and the Students’ Union Shop in Falmer House.
CHRISTMAS VACATION OPENING TIMES

Vacation: Sat 11 Dec–Mon 3 Jan inclusive. Closure days: Fri 24 Dec–Mon 3 Jan inclusive. All locations are shut on closure days unless otherwise stated.

CATERING OUTLETS
Baguette Express: Weekdays 8am–4pm
Bramber House: Weekdays 8.30am–4.30pm
East Slope Bar: Open every day normal pub times except closed 24–26 Dec incl.
IDS Restaurant: Weekdays 8am–2pm, 3.30pm–4.45pm. Closed 23 Dec–4 Jan incl.
Laines Restaurant: Weekdays 12noon–2pm

Bolthole, Falmer Bar, Grapevine, Nothouse, Park Village Lounge, Pitslop: Closed throughout vacation.

SCHOOL CAFES
Bridge café (Pevensey): Weekdays 9am–2.15pm
Chichester I café: Weekdays 9am–4pm
Dhaka café (Arts C): Weekdays 9am–4pm

Doctor’s Orders (BSMS): Weekdays 8am–2.30pm
Pevensey I café: Mon, Wed and Fri 9am–4pm. Tue 9am–2pm, Thu 9am–1.30pm

Arts B café, Pathway café (Eng I), EDB café: Closed throughout vacation.

CAMPUSSHOPS
Newsagents: Weekdays 7.30am–2.30pm
Students’ Union Stores, York House: Weekdays 8am–7pm, weekends 8am–5pm. During University closure open 8am–1pm every day except closed 25–28 Dec and 1–3 Jan incl.

SERVICES
Library: Mon, Wed–Fri 9am–5.30pm, Tue 9am–7.30pm, Closed 24 Dec–3 Jan and weekends except Sat 8–Sun 9 Jan

CDEC: Weekdays 10am–1pm, 2pm–3pm
Sportscentre and Falmer Sports Complex: Normal hours except closed from 12.30pm on Sat 23 Dec–3 Jan incl.

Academic events

MON 6 DEC
5pm Open seminar: Checoti Gill and Sue Sheerin (Sussex). Expectations and experience of postgraduate international students and university teachers. Arts D640.

TUE 7 DEC
12.30pm Life History seminar: Olivia Bennett and Sibohan Warington (Parno). Reflections on ten years of community-based oral history and development. Library, meeting room.

4pm COGS Seminar: Peter Cheng (Sussex). Diagrammatic re- codification of probability theory. Arundel 404A.


FRI 10 DEC
2.15pm SPRU CENTRIM seminar: Nick Crafts (LSF). Further thoughts on the social savings of railways. Freeman Centre G24/G25.

MON 13 DEC
6.30pm McCrea centenary lecture: John Barrow (Cambridge). Some universes I have known. BSMS lecture theatre.

WED 15 DEC
1pm IDS seminar: Linda Waldman (IDS), FRSPs and environmental outcomes. IDS 221.

EXHIBITIONS
Wed 8 Dec–Tue 4 Jan
Same Sky: Liar Liar Pants on Fire
Children’s art from six local schools, inspired by the themes of the Christmas show, Pinocchio. Gardner Arts Centre.

Arts events

PERFORMANCE
Sun 5 Dec
6pm–8pm Carol service

Wed 8 Dec–Tue 4 Jan
Various times
Pinocchio
This adaptation of the classic children’s adventure story contains all the macabre elements of the tale with a huge range of daring stunts as well as songs and dance. Gardner Arts Centre.

Thu 9 Dec
8–10pm Orchestra and Chamber Choir concert

Small ads

Wanted: Temp. accomm. in Bton for N/S new female staff member; for Mon–Thu 2 weeks, Ext. 3376. E: kristin@foxwalker.11.wanadoo.co.uk.

For sale: Rover Metro 100 Knightsbridge, P reg (57), 28,560 miles. Tax and MOT. New battery and tyres. £1,600. T: 474907.


Sublet: Furnished 1-bed flat for Jan, Feb in Kempton (nr St James’s St). £450 pcm + util. Can move in mid Dec. E: Barbara Minetor on bminetor@chspubs.co.ca.

Creative writing workshop: Meets Weeds, 10.30am–12.30pm nr London Rd station. Places available for next 10 sessions to start 12/1/05. cost £80. T: todd Kingsley Jones (Sussex writer in residence, 2000) on 612705, E: t todd@blitonline libero.co.uk.

For sale: Westfield acoustic guitar. 6-string, cutaway body. £95 with case. T: 9787 504452.

For sale: 5 dr Peugeot 306 1.4XL. Reg. 65K miles, FSH. 7th tax & MoT. Roof bars and top box. £1,200 ono. Ext. 3539, E: wj.watson@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: Single divan with storage £40 ono. Hotpoint washing machine £80 ono. E: Mike@33@sussex.ac.uk, T: 7769 652934.

To let: Car parking space nr Withdean stadium. E: R.Ganer@sussex.ac.uk.

For sale: 2-seater blue and white sofa. £50 ono. T: 7960 886253.

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Benedict Brook, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie Clune and Rob Reed. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from the staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 17 December with a copy deadline of 1pm on 10 December. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.
New Year, new Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act at the University of Sussex

- New law fully in force from 1 January 2005
- Gives everyone a general right of access to information held by the University
- Requires that written requests for information must be answered within 20 working days
- Protects information from being released in some circumstances
- Requires the University to produce a guide to routinely published information called a Publication Scheme (see www.sussex.ac.uk/central/ps/)
- Covers all information held by the University, for example in paper files, computer files, emails, audio and video recordings, photographs and brochures, whether current or archived

What do I need to know?

- You must respond promptly to requests for information and assist the applicant even if you do not hold the information.
- FOI requests must be made in writing (including emails), state the name of the applicant, an address for correspondence and describe the information requested, but the person requesting the information does not need to tell you it is an FOI request or why they require the information.
- Requests about environmental information fall under the terms of the Environmental Information Regulations and need not be in writing. They can, for example, be telephone requests.
- In some situations information is not required to be released, for example where release would contravene Data Protection law, endanger anyone’s health and safety, breach confidentiality, or compromise commercial interests (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOI exemptions).
- The University is entitled to charge the full cost of postage, copying, printing and other disbursements and a fee in accordance with the fees regulations (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOI fees).
- Support and advice is available from the University Records and Information Manager (Secretariat) and a network of FOI Coordinators (Schools and administrative units). More information is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOI coordinators.

How will the Freedom of Information Act affect me from 1 January 2005?

- You will be entitled to access information from public authorities, including the University of Sussex.
- You will need to act promptly if you receive a request for information (see overleaf for more about this).
- Any information held by the University will potentially be open to scrutiny by the public, including your emails, memos and letters.

What do I need to do?

1. Visit www.sussex.ac.uk/foi to find out more about the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and training for staff.

2. Be prepared to respond to requests for information promptly
   - Learn the University’s information request handling procedures (see overleaf).
   - Find out who your FOI Coordinator and the Records and Information Manager are and how and when they can help you by visiting www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOI coordinators.
   - Be prepared for a rush of requests from January 2005 if you are dealing with information queries in an area involved in controversial research or projects.

3. Start getting your files in order!
Handling FOI requests

The Freedom of Information Act requires the University to deal with written requests promptly and in any event within 20 days from 1 January 2005. Please follow the steps below, and ensure that you set up an email vacation message and arrange cover for checking your correspondence while you are away from work.

Requests for personal information should continue to be dealt with under the terms of the Data Protection Act (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/dataprotection for further details).

Journalists should be referred to the Press and Communications Office (press@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 8888).

For routinely published information refer the requestor to the online Publication Scheme www.sussex.ac.uk/central/ps/, or information@sussex.ac.uk for copies of printed brochures and leaflets.

Requests for environmental information, including telephone requests, should be referred to the Safety and Environment Officer (eir@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 8904).

Telephone requests for information do not fall under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act but it may be appropriate to advise a telephone enquirer to clarify their request in writing.

STEP 1: Receive and assess the request

Date stamp or note the date of receipt on letters and faxes if you are the first member of staff to receive them (even if you are not the person to respond).

Seek clarification if the request is unclear and note the date when you did this.

Decide whether you can deal with the request or whether it needs to be passed on.

- For simple routine requests in line with your normal duties go to Step 2 or
- If the request does not fall within your remit, forward it to the relevant person without delay (there is a legal duty to assist the applicant) or
- If you are unsure, or the request is complex or unusual go to step 3.

STEP 2: Answer simple / routine request

Supply the information promptly or in any case within 20 working days.

If you routinely give out certain information for free you should continue to do this. Otherwise you should charge for photocopying, postage, printing in line with the fees regulations (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOIfees for guidance). If you envisage a delay, acknowledge the request and inform the requestor of the reasons for the delay and when the information will be supplied.

If, after searching for the information, you find that no information is held contact your FOI Coordinator without delay before responding.

STEP 3: Seek help for complex / unusual requests or if you are unsure

If you are unsure who may have the information find out from your colleagues and manager who does and pass the request on without delay.

Contact your FOI Coordinator (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOIcoordinators for details) in the first instance or in their absence the Records and Information Manager (foi@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 6523) if you need advice about the Freedom of Information Act or think that the request:

- may be part of an orchestrated campaign or repeated, or vexatious i.e. intended to disrupt the work of the University
- is likely to be costly / time consuming to provide (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOIfees for guidance)
- is for sensitive information that may be exempt under one of the FOI exemptions (see www.sussex.ac.uk/records/FOIexemptions) e.g. commercially sensitive, confidential, exempt under data protection regulations or release would endanger someone’s health and safety.