Sussex launches Second Life campus

Sussex students, staff and visitors will soon be flying around a computerised version of the campus to study, work, share information and socialise.

The 3D internet ‘island’ looks like the real Sussex campus. It can be visited by people who are signed up to the virtual world, Second Life.

Every user (called a resident) creates a virtual version of themselves (called an avatar) in Second Life, which they can transport to different locations, such as the Sussex campus. Once they’ve arrived, they can fly around to visit the Library, attend online seminars, or call into the Students’ Union or Meeting House.

Tom Shaw, a graduate intern with the University’s in-house Web Team, developed the virtual campus with colleague Beth Granter.

He says: “We really wanted to make it look like Sussex, so instead of going for some fantasy look, we’ve recreated the centre of campus, including its distinctive Basil Spence architecture.”

Developers see the campus as a new platform for developing teaching, learning and communication tools that encourage interaction and collaboration between users.

Potential uses for the virtual campus, still in its developmental stages but open to explore, include:

- Providing online resources, lectures and seminars in an engaging, interactive format that would appeal to students and distance learners.
- Offering a chance for potential students – e.g. those who live abroad – to ‘visit’, explore the University and get a feel for the place. The School of Science and Technology is already thinking of staging a virtual open day.
- Offering a more dynamic and engaging website that makes use of developments for the internet generation of students.
- Keeping people up to date with study information and University news.
- Showcasing student work, including films, exhibitions, design work and science or arts projects.

Tom says: “The online campus allows University members and visitors to get more out of being part of a real community. It’ll be interesting to see how it develops as users sign up and get involved.

“We’ll now be working with academics and the University’s Creativity Zone (part of the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Creativity) to improve learning and teaching opportunities online, as well as developing the social networking side of things.”

Dr Judith Good from the Informatics department is currently teaching a course that involves students creating educational experiences in Second Life for other institutions, such as further education colleges.

She says: “We are still exploring the potential usefulness of Second Life for teaching and learning, but we really wanted to push the boundaries with this project and get our students doing something exciting and innovative. It’s great that these projects might then find a home on the Sussex virtual campus.”

To find out more, see www.sussex.ac.uk/secondlife
Gavin Ashenden (University Chaplain) Charles Williams, Alchemy and Integration Kent State University Press, £36.50 (hardback) ISBN: 0873387813

He was a close friend of T.S. Eliot, deeply admired by C.S. Lewis, inspirational for W.H. Auden in his journey to faith, and a literary sparring partner for J.R.R. Tolkien. Yet, half a century after his death, much of Charles Williams’ life and work remains an enigma. The questions that arose from his immersion in Rosicrucian and hermetic culture and ideology – central to understanding Williams’ thought and art – remain provocatively unexplored. For a decade of his early adulthood, Williams was a member of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, a form of neo-Rosicrucianism.

Dan Hough (Lecturer in Politics), Graham Timmins and Simon Green The Politics of the New Germany Taylor & Francis, £75 (hardback) ISBN: 9780415383856

The Politics of the New Germany takes a new approach to understanding politics in post-unification Germany. Assuming only elementary knowledge, it focuses on debates and issues to portray Germany’s key institutions and policies. Written in a straightforward style by a team of four experts, each of the chapters draws on a rich variety of real-world examples to illustrate its arguments. In doing so, it brings new relevance to topics such as Germany’s foreign policy role and its social market economy, specifically for a student audience.

Catherine Smith (Associate Tutor, CCE) Lip The Poetry Business, £7.95 (paperback) ISBN: 9781902382980

Second full poetry collection from acclaimed, prize-winning “next generation” poet Catherine Smith. Dajit Nagra described it as “Funny and intelligent – a uniquely comic-serious exploration of the conflicts between contemporary mores and physical desires.” The publishers say Lip “displays a fierce... eroticism, seen... through the language of the human body.”


This book argues that medical law can usefully be understood in terms of jurisdiction. The overriding objective of characterising the subject in this way is to make medical law – as opposed to the ethical dilemmas and issues that usually preface its involvement, and upon which much of the academic medical law literature focuses – the object of critical analysis. As well as capturing the fact of medical law’s steady expansion, the notion of jurisdiction also allows for an analysis of the nature and consequences of the power that accompanies this.

New research centre of the American South

A new research centre at Sussex will focus on the social, political, economic and cultural history of the American South.

The concentration of scholars of the South (Professor Robert Cook, Dr Richard Follett, Dr Jarod Roll and Dr Clive Webb) in the American Studies department already makes Sussex a focal point in the field.

The main aim of the Marcus Cunliffe Centre for the Study of the American South is to build and enhance research networks between this core of expertise and scholars in the USA, Europe and elsewhere in the UK.

“The Centre’s inaugural programme makes an impressive start toward this goal,” says the director, Dr Jarod Roll.

In March, Professor Eric Foner from Columbia University – described by Jarod as “the most distinguished historian of the United States” – will deliver the Centre’s inaugural lectures on the contradictions of slavery and freedom in American history.

Professor Foner’s visit will be accompanied by a series of research seminars featuring leading scholars in the field from the USA, Europe and the UK.

Building on Professor Foner’s theme, the Cunliffe lecture series will feature subsequent talks by Professor Tera Hunter (Princeton), Dr Richard Follett (Sussex) and Pulitzer Prize winner Professor Steven Hahn (Pennsylvania).

For more details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/cunliffe/ or contact Jarod on j.h.roll@sussex.ac.uk.

Sun will vapourise Earth unless we change orbit

New calculations by Sussex astronomers predict that the Earth will be swallowed up by the Sun in about 7.6 billion years unless the Earth’s orbit can be altered.

Dr Robert Smith, Emeritus Reader in Astronomy, says his team previously calculated that the Earth would escape ultimate destruction, although be battered and burnt to a cinder. But this did not take into account the effect of the drag caused by the outer atmosphere of the dying Sun.

He says: “We showed previously that, as the Sun expanded, it would lose mass in the form of a strong wind, much more powerful than the current solar wind. This would reduce the gravitational pull of the Sun on the Earth, allowing the Earth’s orbit to move outwards, ahead of the expanding Sun.”

“If that were the only effect, the Earth would indeed escape final destruction. However, the tenuous outer atmosphere of the Sun extends a long way beyond its visible surface, and it turns out the Earth would actually be orbiting within these very low-density outer layers. The drag caused by this low-density gas is enough to cause the Earth to drift inwards, and finally to be captured and vapourised by the Sun.”

The new paper was written in collaboration with Dr Klaus-Peter Schroeder, previously at Sussex, who is now in the Astronomy department of the University of Guanajuato in Mexico.

Life on Earth will have disappeared long before 7.6 billion years, however. Scientists have shown that the Sun’s slow expansion will cause the temperature at the surface of the Earth to rise. Oceans will evaporate and the atmosphere will become laden with water vapour, which (like carbon dioxide) is a very effective greenhouse gas. Eventually, the oceans will boil dry and the water vapour will escape into space. In a billion years from now the Earth will be a very hot, dry and uninhabitable ball.

Bookmark is a regular review of new books by Sussex authors.

You can buy these books at the University Bookshop in Bramber House, or order online at www.sussexunibooks.co.uk. Staff get a 10% discount on all products in the Bookshop on production of valid ID.
Open staff forum considers green paper

The Vice-Chancellor's presentation to the two open staff forum meetings on 12 and 14 February covered the development of the University's strategic plan and the concept for the future academic organisation of the University.

Professor Michael Farthing highlighted the scale of step change set out by the green paper — aiming to lift the University into the top quartile of the 1994 Group.

Asked about the timescale, the Vice-Chancellor said that the strategic plan builds on the new strategies already developed last year in relation to research and to teaching and learning. The existing plan for the University is now out of date and the University needs to have a new one in place by the summer.

He explained that the reason for seeking to deliver annual surpluses of 4% on turnover is to deliver financial sustainability. This is not a matter of achieving "profits", but allowing capacity for investment in academic priorities and future developments, and to ensure a robust position against unexpected shocks.

In relation to curriculum development, Professor Joanne Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) said that preliminary reports from the groups that have been leading on different areas will be published in the coming weeks.

Asked about plans for the development of business and management, the Vice-Chancellor said that there are no plans to establish a business school at Sussex, nor an MBA. The growth of programmes in business and management will build on existing areas of excellence in which Sussex has distinctive and effective offerings. Through existing partnerships with Study Group there are already international students on campus wanting to enter such areas of study.

On improving decision making, the Vice-Chancellor set out the concept for the development of the academic organisation of the University. The detail he presented was as set out in his piece in the Bulletin on 8 February.

Among the key points were:
- This is aimed to push autonomy and financial responsibility down closer to academic disciplines;
- This development will provide closer links between the executive and the academic heart of the University, allowing for swifter and more effective decision-making;
- This plan relies on stronger academic leadership, which needs to be invested in and supported by the University;
- This is an academically led evolution of current structures;
- If successful, this will better support plans for the development and growth of the University;
- This is not about achieving cost savings: plans involve growth and expansion, representing increased opportunities for staff.

The deans have been asked to come back by the end of term with potential academic groupings. A parallel process for the development of support structures will be put in hand. 2008-09 will be a transitional year while the new structures are put in place.

Asked whether the devolution of financial responsibility could increase barriers to interdisciplinary working, the Vice-Chancellor said that the new faculties will have an important role in fostering and supporting interdisciplinary, and the overarching research themes will also be important. The minimum size of the new academic units will militate against silo-thinking.

The Vice-Chancellor said that research themes will range across the potential new organisational structures. In theory the work of any member of academic staff could relate to any of the themes, irrespective of the academic area within which they work.

A copy of the presentation is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/vc

Developing our research themes

At last week's open forum meetings for staff, I was pleased that research themes were a key topic of discussion. So they should be.

As our research strategy says, "Research themes will not necessarily map onto existing Department and School structures; they may be existing or emergent; they may be thematic, multi-disciplinary or post-disciplinary."

"What they will all have is a combination of excellent leadership, outstanding staff, a vibrant postgraduate community, external funding support, a range of international publications, a breadth of peer review recognition and well-established collaborations and strategic partnerships."

I believe that the case for developing research themes has been soundly made. We have set out the purpose clearly and robustly - most recently by the Vice-Chancellor in his blog before Christmas. They should help us set out Sussex's research identity nationally and internationally. They should reinforce our innovative interdisciplinary traditions. And they should help us develop the capacity to generate significant additional income.

I am glad that the discussion is therefore now identifying what these research themes should be.

We of course have a wealth of material and information on which to draw - with the RAE submission material being the bedrock, but not the limit, of our thinking. New ideas are being shaped up in discussions with schools and departments, and at activities such as the Research Christmas Stocking event. (Incidentally, I am pleased that we will be able to announce the four successful proposals from that very shortly.)

I have received many suggestions and ideas from colleagues across Sussex. I have personally had meetings with scores of individuals and groups across campus. Indeed, I can honestly say that I have not turned down any invitation from any academic colleague to meet and discuss ideas for the creation of themes.

The next stage then for me is to take a paper to Senate setting out the thinking that we have taken from all of this. I hope to identify broad potential themes as the starting point for more structured discussions. I shall be asking Deans in consultation with Heads of Department to nominate leading members of their schools to attend the discussion of the potential themes.

These working groups will then publish documents fleshing out these themes for comment and feedback from within the University, looking to have a final paper with firm proposals to Senate in the summer term.

Part of what will make the research themes fly will be partnership with major national and international institutions. I am delighted to point to the new agreement with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - which featured in Bulletin a month ago (25 January) - as a leading recent example of what we can and should be looking for.

Another element of what will make the themes work will be getting right the underpinning support from Professional Services. I am delighted to say we have an impressively strong shortlist of candidates for the new Director of Research and Enterprise, for which final interviews take place next week. I hope to be in a position to report positive outcomes to Senate.

Finally, as we shape up the research themes, we will also be holding a second event to showcase research at Sussex. In preparation for that I am kicking off work on the annual research review. Like the first, I want this to be a visually striking and iconic publication. We’re also exploring new ideas such as video presentation on the web. Anyone who wants their research to be featured, please email me directly at r.j.allison@sussex.ac.uk.
Enterprising students through to grand final

Budding entrepreneurs from Sussex could pocket £3,000 after winning the regional final of a business strategy competition in Oxford on 14 February.

The six students beat off teams from eight other universities in the south-east – including Oxford – and will now represent the University at the Flux grand final in Plymouth on 17 and 18 March.

Team member Lisa Moss thanked University staff Sally Wright and Sally Atkinson for their support.

She said: “We really couldn’t have asked for more from them – they’ve just been so inspirational and always give 110% in the work they do for enterprise at Sussex.”

“It’s a cliche to say it, but it actually felt better knowing that everyone involved in the enterprise department at Sussex would be proud of us, than actually winning the money. For poor students, that’s really saying something!”

Fellow winner Thomas Kingston agreed. He said: “The University paid for us to stay the night before the regional final and also gave us a generous food budget.

Above (left to right): Lisa Moss, Mark Eisner, Rainisha Popekwe, Diane Mesiro, Carmen Ghinoldus and Thomas Kingston were chosen after winning the cross-campus ‘Xing’ competition in iQbate this January.

“It feels excellent to have beaten Oxford University to the grand final.”

The team had to come up with a strategy using the game of ‘Xing’, an interactive game simulating the development of a new business venture. They finished with a pitch to a team of business experts in the style of BBC TV show ‘Dragon’s Den’.

The Sussex pitch was based on a company that makes and sells living spaces for domestic animals.

Sally Wright from the Research and Regional Development Division said: “They performed brilliantly, and presented themselves professionally and coherently. We’re so proud of them.”

How old are the trees?

While having a great respect for the authors of ‘A walk on the wild side’ (Bulletin 8 February), I take full responsibility and blame for the text of the Boundary Walk leaflet. I hope readers will find it informative and useful even if it does stir debate. I stand by my estimate of the age of the trees.

I know little about wall archaeology, but the Pelhams bought Stanmer Estate in 1713, and then acquired the Firmer Manor in 1775, whether the manor already had the flint wall is uncertain.

However, I have taken a keen interest in dendrochronology (tree ageing) for over 20 years. Two facts seem relevant here.

First, it is well known by southern English foresters that beech trees normally live for about 300 years. At that age, they tend to succumb to fungal infection and senesce. The beeches of Front Belt are doing just that, and require regular safety checks and surgery.

Secondly, a population of 295 oaks that I know well were recorded as being planted in 1814. Their average girth at breast height is 206 centimetres, equivalent to about 100 centimetres per year. If the average girth of the Sportcentre oaks is 312 centimetres, then it fits with the age of the beeches as being about 300 years since planting.

Please enjoy the Boundary Walk.

Dr Martyn Stenning, Life Sciences

The Times of 13 February named Sussex student Jay Bernard as one of the “Top ten literary stars of 2008”. It said she is “fast establishing a reputation as one of the UK’s most talented young writers with her poetry collection Your Sign is Cuckoo, Girl” and hailed her poems as “sensitive” and “emotionally-charged”.

Ann Head, who qualified in social work at Sussex in 1968, is to receive an MBE “for services to children and families”. Ann works in Devon for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and as an independent social worker.

Readers of the Kent and Sussex Courier have named eventer Emily Llewellyn, who lives in Heathfield, as their Sports Personality of the Year. Emily is studying for a degree in Business and Management at Sussex with the help of a Sports Bursary from the University. She will receive her award from former England and Tottenham Hotspur footballer Gary Stevens at a special awards evening on Tuesday (26 February).

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Dr Naomi Tadmor, Senior Lecturer in History, will spend three months at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem after being awarded the Lady Davis Fellowship and Visiting Professorship for 2008-09. Naomi will be working on her current project on English Bible translation, as well as developing new collaborative work on international biblical translation and scholarship.

FIRST CLASS

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Belsen survivor’s book tells story of Jewish Schindler

The controversial story of a man who saved the lives of Hungarian Jews by striking deals with their Nazi captors is the subject of a new book by one of the people he rescued – now an Emeritus Professor of German at Sussex.

Professor Ladislaus Löb was 11 when the Nazis invaded his native Hungary in 1944 and began rounding up Jews and deporting them to the concentration camps. Ladislaus and his father went from a ghetto in Transylvania to a hideout in Budapest, then to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and finally to freedom in Switzerland.

Ladislaus eventually arrived in Britain and became an academic at Sussex in 1963. Having earned a reputation as a literary scholar, he translated the acclaimed Holocaust memoir Nine Suitcases by Béla Zsolt.

His latest book – Dealing With Satan: Rezso Kasztner’s daring rescue mission – offers the first full account of Kasztner’s enterprise and the experiences of those he rescued from Bergen-Belsen.

The Hungarian Jew and political activist persuaded leading members of the SS to trade Jewish lives for cash or the prospect of lenient treatment after the war.

“Kasztner was neither a knight in shining armour nor a traitor.”

By bluffing, defying and bribing SS bosses, Kasztner rescued almost 1,700 men, women and children from Bergen-Belsen.

Ladislaus and his father were among them; they managed to join a group including prominent and wealthy Jews who could afford to pay the required ransom organised by Kasztner.

The notoriety of this scheme – seen by some as collaboration of the worst kind – led to a spectacular trial and Kasztner’s murder by Jewish extremists in Israel in 1957. His reputation as a Jewish hero of the Holocaust continues to court controversy.

Ladislaus says: “Kasztner was neither a knight in shining armour nor a traitor. Arrogant and devious, but uniquely resourceful and brave, he was precisely the kind of person needed to deal with some of the most evil men in the world.

“For a Jew to stand up to the SS and to save as many other Jews as Kasztner did (in fact many more than Schindler, whose task was made easier by his not being a Jew) was an astonishing achievement.”

Dealing With Satan was published on 14 February. Ladislaus will be talking about his book at a launch at the London Jewish Cultural Centre on 5 March. He is also due to appear at the London Jewish Book Week on 27 February, along with Rezso Kasztner’s daughter, and at the Edinburgh Festival in August.

Autobat simulates call of the wild for survey of rare species

One of the UK’s rarest mammals – Bechstein’s bat – will be surveyed and monitored under a new three-year project using technology developed at Sussex.

Bechstein’s Bat Project, launched this month by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), aims to map the national distribution of this rare and elusive bat. The project will use an ultrasound synthesizer, called the ‘Sussex Autobat’, which simulates social calls to lure these tree-dwelling bats into a harmless harp trap.

The method was developed by leading Dr David Hill, Lecturer in Ecology and Conservation at Sussex, with a freelance bat consultant.

They have already used it to map the distribution of the species across the whole of Sussex. It uses a model of ideal habitat to predict in which woods female breeding roosts are likely to occur and these woods are then surveyed using the Autobat.

David said: “A rough estimate has put the British population of Bechstein’s bat at just 1,500 – compared with estimates of around 1.3 million for the Common Pipistrelle.

“But the truth is, for Bechstein’s, we just don’t know how many there are. They are extremely difficult to observe in their foraging and roosting habitats, which are usually in dense woodland, and they can be very hard to capture. With our technique they can be captured much more frequently and safely.”

Under the new project, BCT is aiming to undertake the first survey for Bechstein’s bats across their entire UK range in England and Wales. The surveys will be done by volunteers from local bat groups who will be trained in using these new methods.

Helen Miller, Bechstein’s Bat Project Officer at BCT, said: “The project will give us detailed data for the Bechstein’s bat for the first time, which will make an enormous difference by informing our conservation work for this species.

“It will also leave a legacy of trained, enthusiastic volunteers who can help keep track of the Bechstein’s bat in the long term to help ensure their survival.”
Politics lecturer wins national teaching award

Dr Tim Bale, Senior Lecturer in Politics, has won a national prize for his teaching. He has been awarded the main prize in this year’s Political Studies Association (PSA) Bernard Crick Awards for Outstanding Teaching and will receive it at the PSA’s national conference in April.

The judging panel noted “his continued reflection on best practice and the high regard in which he is held by his peers and students alike”.

This comes as no surprise to his colleagues in his department who nominated him. Tim has come to be known not only for high-quality, dynamic and innovative teaching in his own courses but for pioneering innovations for the department as a whole, such as the introduction of focus-group techniques to gauge student feedback on courses.

Tim’s success means that four members of the Politics and Contemporary European Studies department have won PSA teaching awards. Professor Paul Taggart and Professor Aleks Szczepaniak won the main prize in 1998 and 2004 respectively and Dr Dan Hough won the new entrant’s prize in 2004.

The Sussex Politics department has now won the Crick prize more often than any other department in the country.

Head of Department, Professor Paul Webb, is delighted with the PSA’s decision. He said: “This prize is recognition of Tim’s dedication and hard work since joining the department in 2003.

“The fact that we now have four Sussex faculty who have won the PSA teaching award is reflection of the fact that we take our teaching very seriously.

“We are also interested in learning from and guiding each other and there is a real culture of ‘talking teaching’ in our department.

“In the last couple of years we have held a number of away-days to revamp core courses and exchange ideas on best practice, and we always try to involve graduate teaching assistants in these events.

“All this was reflected in Politics’ strong score in the National Student Survey.”

500 not out for physics prof

A prolific physics professor is celebrating the appearance of his 500th academic publication.

Peter Townsend, Research Professor of Experimental Physics, has reached the milestone with an output that includes five books and about 10 multi-authored books.

Extremely few academics make it to 500 publications, indeed very few even make it beyond 100.

Peter explains that the exceptions are often those running a service, such as X-ray or NMR analysis, who are included on many papers to which they contribute.

In his case there is an element of that, as he has built several unique pieces of equipment. Consequently he has had many visitors who wished to work with him and use his apparatus.

As a result, many of Peter’s publications have been a joint effort. “No way could I produce 500 papers on my own,” he admits.

He has managed to involve more than 500 co-authors (including 62 postgraduate students) from about 38 countries. About a third of Peter’s final-year project students have also published papers with him.

There’s a little more to it, though: “Basically I am good on having original ideas and have exploited my friends to build the equipment and do the mathematics.”

And any academics who are planning to try and emulate Peter’s feat might like to bear in mind another key factor. “I also write quickly!” he says.

Most of Peter’s work over the last 50 years has been to do with understanding imperfections in insulating materials and then predicting and exploiting their properties.

Most recently he has worked on improving photomultiplier detectors both for physics and for the detection of breast and skin cancer.

Obituary

Richard Burton, 61, formerly Professor of French and Francophone Studies, died at the end of January. He had been undergoing treatment for leukaemia.

Richard came to Sussex in 1973 having completed his BA in modern languages at Oxford and a doctorate on the French philosopher and surrealist ethnographer Michel Leiris, who wrote on Africa and the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

This chimed with Richard’s own interest in the Francophone world, and he came to know both the French- and English-speaking Caribbean well, spending a year at the University of the West Indies.

At Sussex he joined AFRAS (the former School of African and Asian Studies), creating innovative programmes of study to enable generations of French-language majors to undertake their year abroad outside Europe, and helping to develop interdisciplinary courses on multicultural societies.

Having studied both the French- and English-speaking Caribbean he was well-placed to write authoritatively on the region, as in his much-admired Afro-Creole (1997).

He was also immersed in the study of French society and culture of the 19th and 20th centuries, completing two parts of an intended trilogy concerned with politics, violence and the Catholic religion.

He also published books on Baudelaire and Poulenc, and left an unfinished manuscript on Messianian.

He was a man of many parts, maintaining a large allotment from which he kept himself supplied with vegetables (he was an enthusiastic cook of hearty dishes). While no sportsman (though he did turn out for the University eleven), he followed cricket keenly, and possessed a great knowledge of the game.

Richard moved to France on retiring early from Sussex. An obituary in his local paper described him as a "colourful character", observing that while he was "at heart French" he retained his British sense of humour, naming his last dog 'Frog'.
Second year opinions sought in new survey

Second year undergraduates can make their views count when a new survey launches at Sussex next month.

The Sussex Student Experience Survey (SSES) goes live on 3 March, providing students with an opportunity to express their opinion about the quality of their experience at Sussex.

The SSES was developed by a group that included academics, administrative staff and the Students’ Union and was initially piloted last summer. The University has now decided to make the survey available to all second year undergraduates.

The main purpose of the survey is to provide the University with a comprehensive picture of students’ experiences at Sussex. A public report will be produced based on the findings from the survey, summarizing the major results, identifying the main areas of concern as well as formulating action plans to improve the quality of student experience in the immediate future.

The University wants as many students as possible participating in the survey and departments are in the process of developing their own publicity action plans. In addition, flyers and posters will be distributed across campus.

More information about the survey can be found at www.sussex.ac.uk/tdu/sses

NSS response rate up

Hundreds of Sussex finalists have completed the National Student Survey since it went live on 4 February, official response rates show.

As the Bulletin went to press, Ipsos MORI (which conducts the poll of final year undergraduates), said that 39.5% of eligible students at Sussex had already taken part – more than double the 16% who had completed it at the same point in last year’s survey.

Increased visibility around campus as well as greater co-operation from academic staff have helped lift response rates closer to the University’s target of 75%.

Students can fill in the survey at any computer by going to www.thestudentsurvey.com

For more information and latest statistics, go to www.sussex.ac.uk/sss

Undertake research and get paid

The Junior Research Associate Scheme launched by the School of Social and Cultural Studies (SocCul) in January has now been developed into a University-wide scheme and extended across all schools.

As with the SocCul scheme, the aim is to provide promising undergraduates with ‘hands-on’ experience of research during the summer vacation and to encourage them to consider a career in research.

The University scheme provides 30 bursaries for undergraduates in the ‘middle’ years of their degree (i.e. not the first or last year) to undertake paid research during the 2008 summer vacation for a period of 8-10 weeks. The bursaries are equivalent to £200 per week.

In addition, four joint Wellcome Trust/University of Sussex bursaries are available to undergraduates in Life Sciences and the Medical School (BSMS).

The scheme is competitive and applications must be sponsored by a member of faculty in the school who is willing to act as supervisor. The deadline for applications is 12 noon on Friday 14 March.

For further details and an application form, see www.sussex.ac.uk/scholarships_and_bursaries/jra

News in brief ↓

It’s the Final Countdown

All finalists – undergraduate and postgraduate – are invited to the ‘Final Countdown’ starting at 12 noon in Mandela Hall on Wednesday (27 February). Exhibition stalls and workshops will help students to feel prepared for the coming months. For details and booking, see www.sussex.ac.uk/cdeo/final_countdown

Healthy Campus Week

A week-long programme of events to promote health and well-being starts on Monday (25 February). For details, go to www.sussexsport.com and click on ‘Healthy Campus’.

Hilary Benn to speak on climate change and development

Sussex alumnus Hilary Benn MP will deliver the Sussex Development Lecture on Thursday (28 February). Currently Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, he previously had responsibility for International Development. The event takes place at 5pm in the Chichester lecture theatre, where Mr Benn will discuss climate change and development.

Leaving do for Peter Brooks

Peter Brooks, Director of Research and Regional Development, retires on Monday 31 March. There will be a retirement farewell on that day from 12.30pm in the Meeting House. RSVP v.seymour@sussex.ac.uk for catering purposes. There is a card and collection in room 203, Sussex House.

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin
Academic events

MON 25 FEB
3pm International Relations seminar: Nafeez Ahmed (Sussex), The social relations of imperial violence and genocide. Arts C233.
5pm Education seminar: Terry Somerset (Sussex), Tracing primary school access in Kenya. Arts D110.

TUE 26 FEB
12.30pm Life History seminar: Linden West (Canterbury) and Mary Herrn (BSMS), Medical life histories. Pev 1, 2A2.
2pm SEI seminar: Daniel Winocott (Birmingham), Engaging the welfare state? Arts C233.
4pm Lecture: Graham Zeitch (CCRC), The work of the CCRC. EDB 121.
4pm American Studies seminar: Simon Wenet (Heidelberg), Armed self-defence and the civil rights movement. Arts A155.
4pm Cognitive Science seminar: John Williams (Cambridge), Incidental learning of word order. Pevensy 1A7.
4.15pm Anthropology seminar: Mathis Pelkmans (LSE), Doubt, hope and disillusion in a post-Soviet central Asian industrial wasteland. Arts C233.
5pm Geography seminar: Charles Harris (Cardiff), Laboratory monitoring and field monitoring of penguin mass movement processes. Arundel 1B.
5pm English colloquium: Nicholas Royse (Sussex), Deconstruction and queer theory. Arts A71.
5pm Migration seminar: Kathy Burrell (De Montfort), TBA. Chichester lecture theatre.

THU 28 FEB
12noon Cognitive Psychology seminar: Anna Taylor (London), What limits the possibility of the acquisition of avian influenza viruses to man? IMS lecture theatre.
2.15pm Freeman Centre seminar: Kim Shurbridge, Education and practice in engineering teams. Freeman Centre C24/25.
MON 3 MARCH
3pm International Relations seminar: Claudia Aradau (Open), Security, biology and the "war on terror". Arts C233.
2pm Environmental History seminar: Brian Morris (Goldsmiths), Insects and human life. Arts E419.
4pm History seminar: Tony Kushner (Southampton), Contesting anti-Semitism: An alternative perspective. Arts A155.
5pm Education seminar: Terry Robinson (Michigan), Drugs, neuropasticity and addiction. Pev 1, 1B3.
5pm Sussex Development lecture: Hilary Benn (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), title TBA. Chichester lecture theatre.

FRI 29 FEB
1pm Biochemistry and Genetics & Development seminar: John McCleary (London), What limits the possibility of the acquisition of avian influenza viruses to man? IMS lecture theatre.
5pm Anthropology seminar: Matthew English (LSE), The rise of the Brotherhood. Arts C233.
4pm Seminar: Christian Wiese (Sussex), Jewish, international law and human rights. Freeman Centre C24/25.

MARCH
3pm International Relations seminar: Claudia Aradau (Open), Security, biology and the "war on terror". Arts C233.
4pm Languages and Linguistics seminar: Tim Wharton (Sussex), The relevance of non-verbal behaviour. Arts A171.
5pm Education seminar: Ruth Leitch (Sussex), title tbc. Arts D110.
TUE 4 MARCH
12.30pm Freeman Centre seminar: John Goody, Irenesse, Climate change and behavioural economics, Freeman Centre C24/25.

Small ads

Holiday let: 3-bed mobile home (new 2007) in north Cornwall (nr Rock), sleeps 6, indoor swimming pool + restaurant & bars. 7 mile Jn 20 on A30, 1.5m to Porthtowan. £125 pw, 10% off Nov-Dec. E prof2007@sussex.ac.uk.

Holiday let: 2-bed S/C apartment, sleeps 6, available 1-2 weeks in Puebla Marina, Spain, 28 June-12 July. £350 pw, 10% off early booking. E tjljos@arcsdy.com.

For sale: 2x 1gb pc2700 DDR SDRAM memory cards, £10 each. E cth20@sussex.ac.uk.

Arts events

Mon 25 Feb
7pm The Hollywood Librarian
The British premiere of a documentary on librarians. The film's director, Ann Seid, will lead a discussion. Arts A2.

Tue 26 Feb
8pm Lunchtime Recital Current MA Film and Video Music students present their work. Meeting House.

Wed 6 Mar
1.20pm Lunchtime Recital Postgraduate and 2nd year Music student, Niko Franklin (voice). Meeting House.

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and James Halmer, with contributions from Jacqui Beating, Maggie Clune and Rob Read. 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 7 March, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 29 February. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.