

Student Experience Report: Part 3

The change in submission date of Part 3 of the SER means that we are writing it with data and information that would not normally be available to us.

WELFARE

ACCESS AGREEMENT

Whilst UEA continued to offer the full range of options; fee waiver, cash bursary and accommodation discount we are keen to ensure that students understand the benefits of the different options and the notional support that a fee waiver gives those who need financial support when they are studying. Uptake of the different options would suggest that students are opting for the support that has the greatest immediate impact.

	2012/13		2013/14	
Cash Only	109	14%	43	7%
£1000 cash and fee waiver	139	17%	162	25.5%
£1000 cash and Accom discount*	283	35%	219	34.5%
Accommodation discount *	179	22%	179	28%
Fee waiver**	97	12%	32	5%
	Total 807		Total 635	

* only yr. 1 students

** default option

We are aware of OFFA's research (March 2014) that suggests a greater focus on early intervention in schools plays a bigger role in relation to retention and success than cash bursaries however, until UEA is able to evaluate and evidence what part bursaries play in retention and success we would like UEA to continue to support students by offering bursaries to support access, success and progression.

UNION RECOMMENDS

That UEA continues to support students by offering bursaries to support access, success and progression. That UEA consults with the UUEAS to ensure that future access agreements are developed in line with OFFA's expectation that students are part of the process and that this effective collaboration is evidenced.

FAITH on CAMPUS

In recent years Faith on Campus has become an important issue for many UEA students.

During the summer of 2012 the sudden and imminent closure of the Islamic Prayer Centre became a big issue which saw campaigns and protests on campus regarding the loss of this facility. Students were particularly concerned with the lack of consultation with users of the Islamic Prayer facility and with the Student Union. The Union lobbied for a detailed consultation to be undertaken on the provision of prayer facilities for the full range of multi faith groups represented on campus and in October 2012 this process started.

In January 2013 a document titled Faith Policy and Recommendations was published.

It noted:

- That the closure of Closure of the Muslim Prayer Facility without adequate consideration of alternative provision had presented a risk to the University of alienating of a section of the University community over a specific grievance.
- Temporary planning permission for the Islamic prayer facility has been extended to June 2014. A faith policy needs to be established, so that arrangements for prayer facilities on campus can be put in place in an orderly and timely manner prior to June 2014.
- The acknowledgement of a resource implication for a prayer facility with 24 hour access

Recommendations included:

- Facilities for prayer, religious observance and worship should be provided for staff¹, and students and, subject to resource considerations, their immediate families (i.e. spouses and children) only.
- The feasibility of establishing a small, safe, secure and managed space/s in the University for prayer that is open permanently should be explored.
- The feasibility of providing better access to prayer facilities outside of semesters should be explored, through discussion with the University Chaplains.

The university extended the lease to June 2014 but we are concerned that nearly two years on there are no concrete proposals to replace the facility or adopt the above recommendations.

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During 2013/2014 Faith societies have struggled to find adequate university space to meet and pray and the Community & Student Rights Officer has received numerous complaints about the restricted opening hours of the Multi Faith centre and the lack of space for faith groups to meet and or pray.

UNION RECOMMENDS

That UEA ensures there is adequate on-campus provision for all faith groups to meet and pray. That there is adequate provision in advance of the Islamic Prayer Centre's lease running out in June 2014 and that UEA involves the UUEAS and the various faith groups represented across campus in any discussions on future provision.

SAFE SPACES on CAMPUS

There have been ongoing conversations with students about the provision of safe spaces in Union House and how that would integrate with UEA's provision of a safe room on campus.

UNION RECOMMENDS

That the Union explores creating a safe room in Union House which will be easily available to students and with opening times which will be flexible to accommodate gigs and LCR Nights.

That UEA commits to ensuring that the safe room is advertised widely so students are aware of its existence. That DoS and the Union continue to work together to achieve this aim.