

OH THE HUMANITIES!

Issue 5
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The newsletter
for Humanities
students

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Q&A with Karl Leydecker, Dean of Humanities

What are your suggestions on improving the library resources, with particular reference to the flexibility of the Core Text Collection (i.e. the length of loan on in-demand books being automatically shortened, and vice versa)?

The Library has received lots of feedback in the IS Survey that students contributed to in the Autumn term. It now has a new system in place where as soon as there are 3 reservations for a title the library tries to purchase more copies. The library is also looking at how it can track items that have had their loan period reduced due to high usage, so that the period can be extended again once the demand has lessened.

What I am quite concerned about is the availability of library resources. Since fees are to rise but there will be less money for universities, will this significantly affect the purchase of new books, online journals or just library resources in general?

The University of Kent recognises the importance of library resources to students and has just allocated an additional £200,000 to the Library for the purchase of core texts and other materials on reading lists which are in highest demand. Online journals are very important to both students and researchers and the Library gets usage statistics that enables it to purchase the material that is used and negotiate with publishers to get the best deals. There will be if anything increased investment in the library in the next few years, in both materials and the building itself, starting with the installation of many more power points to plug in laptops etc. this coming summer.

What is going to be changing with regards to courses/modules offered due to the cuts in university funding from the government?

Although the University is seeing its teaching grant reduced in the coming years, the University is in a very strong position financially and expects to be able to recruit students at the higher fee levels to maintain its resource base. The Faculty is reviewing everything it does in order to ensure that it will be attractive to students even at higher fees and will be seeking to maintain and enhance its programmes. There are no plans for any cutbacks in programmes, though as now we will want to ensure that all modules have a reasonable number of students enrolled on them to make them viable.

If you were a student starting in 2012 and paying £9k fees what you would want from your degree?

I would want an exciting and challenging programme of study from a university like Kent that I could be proud of, one that strikes the right balance between an excellent student experience and a strong research reputation.

Faculty Rep



Laura Budd

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It has certainly been a busy term and it is amazing how quickly it has passed us by. As I have had less contact hours I have had more time to put in to my role this term. I'm sure that many of you would have seen the posters and videos around campus for 'The Good, The Bad & The Ugly' campaign which, thanks to students' input, has provided us with a lot of invaluable feed-

back. I have also been involved in the first ever student led Teaching Awards and the results should be out soon.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to recognize good practice within your subject and nominate your lecturers!

I have also noticed that in the faculty we do not have consistent feedback for the oral presentations that we do. After having

consulted students and discussed this with staff members, presentation feedback is now part of the faculty plan and will be discussed further next term.

Finally, I have really enjoyed this term as Faculty rep and am looking forward to next term—look out for the summer issue of the newsletter for more updates!

Graduate Faculty Rep

After finishing my Undergraduate in 2009 I returned to UKC in September and am currently studying a taught MA in War, Media and Society with the School of History. I'm currently mostly focusing on attempting to resolve postgraduate issues with the library; such as the booking of study Carrels, and attempting to have online renewal for 24-hour loan books re-introduced.

If anyone has anything they would like me to look into for them, or just has any questions, please give me an e-mail at: rsb37@kent.ac.uk



Please email your comments and suggestions to ljb44@kent.ac.uk or write a message on the Facebook page: '**Humanities Students at UoK**'. Please also 'like' this page to receive regular updates on what is happening in the Faculty.

For the latest Faculty news please visit www.kent.ac.uk/humanities and http://www.kentunion.co.uk/studentvoice/course_reps/faculty_reps/humanities/

Dean of Humanities

The Faculty has continued to focus on assignment feedback this year, with the introduction of one to one feedback on at least one assignment per module across all Schools in the Faculty. My sense is that this has been welcomed as very valuable by students and staff alike. In order to ensure that we have got the implementation of this right, the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, which includes all the School reps and the Faculty rep, will be reviewing this at its meeting next term. Meanwhile, in response to a suggestion from the Faculty rep we are now turning our attention to the issue of offering consistent feedback on oral presentations.

The Faculty welcomes the announcement of an injection of funding of £200,000 into the Library's core text collection, and Schools have been working hard to ensure that reading lists are updated to ensure that the money is spent on the most needed items. You can help us in this by sending suggestions for book purchases to module convenors, be it for books not in the library or requests for additional copies of items in high demand.

Each School in the Faculty is increasing its focus on the employability of all its students as part of the University's new Employability Strategy, building on the good practice in some Schools of holding sessions for current students on employability with employers who are former students. The Faculty will also be expanding the number of programmes it offers which involve a placement / year in industry, with this possibility already now in place for every student in the School of Arts.

The University has just approved the Faculty's proposal to allow students on every programme in the Faculty to spend a year abroad, and is expected to approve shortly the option of spending a term abroad as part of every three year degree in the Faculty (and you don't need to be able to speak another language to take up this option). The exchange with Hong Kong University has been so successful that we are expanding the number of exchanges with Hong Kong and China: from 2011/12 we will be sending students to Renmin Univer-

sity in Beijing, and from 2012/13 to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The Faculty now has an Internationalisation website which is designed to showcase its considerable internationalisation activities and this will be developed further in the coming months. <https://www.kent.ac.uk/humanities/facultyoffice/Internationalisation/index.html>

I was delighted that we received 19 applications last week for this year's Faculty Teaching Prize, which is a record number of applications and for the first time includes applicants from every School in the same round. This is a strong indication of the real commitment of staff across the Faculty to excellence in teaching. Laura as Faculty Student Rep is a member of the judging panel, with the results to be announced next term.

May I finally take this opportunity to wish all students in the Faculty every success with their current end-of-term assignments.



Karl Leydecker

Faculty Rep Elect—2011/12

Congratulations to Christabel Milbanke-Brayson on being elected as the Humanities Faculty Representative for 2011/12. She is currently a first year American Studies course rep and will commence her new role at the start of the Autumn Term.

Centre for American Studies Rep



Christopher Munroe

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I think we can all agree that it has been a busy but hopefully successful year so far. In the coming months I will work to improve the support that course reps offer students and towards offering a better sense of community within the centre, particularly for second years due to the lack of a taught core module.

Year abroad students – if you haven't already please read the guide issued by the

International Office which should be in your Kent Mail, it's a really informative document and will help a great deal in preparing for your year out.

We are now coming towards the end of the academic year, work can be stressful and I hope to be able to help in any way possible to make life easier for American Studies students.

Please email me with any questions or comments that you have.

Architecture School Rep

It has been a busy term as ever in the world of Architecture at Kent. This year started well with the RIBA visiting the school, talking to staff and students about the department. The visit resulted in the school securing unconditional continued RIBA validation, so good news for the university and students!

The student society KASA is getting stronger term by term and has just finished its famous open lecture series. This term's series was a success attracting some fantastic speakers and audiences full of students from across all years of the school. It also ran a life drawing class for students and of course a few socials along the way!

KASA has also launched

DC3 its third design competition for students. This year the brief was to design an exhibition building to be built by students and used during Artsfest. Final winners are being decided after Easter.

This term also saw the start of a student chapter for the charity Article 25. The charity designs and constructs buildings and structure for those in greatest need worldwide. So far they have been actively raising money and awareness through cake sales, quiz nights and most recently supporting the Japanese earthquake appeal.

As the number of students this year in the department is at an all time high, space within the Marlowe building is precious. Good news however has arrived in the form of secured

permission from the University to construct a new Crit building behind the Marlowe building and over the Drama workshop yard. This will be great for future students of the School as well as some existing students who will benefit from the extra space to present their work.

All in all morale within the department is high but as the term closes and summer term looms everyone is working hard for final projects and thinking about the end of year exhibition. However extra curricular activities are going strong and vital to the energy of the School. So good luck to all Interiors and Architecture students for the coming few weeks and have a relaxing and yet productive Easter!



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Arts School Rep



Carly Anderson

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This year there have been serious problems within the School of Arts regarding feedback and marks being returned within the three week rule. Following meetings with students, Head of Drama, Head of School and the Dean, we are now on the right track to addressing the issue accordingly. The School now recognises that expectations have not been met and are introducing a

new system to ensure staff are meeting their deadlines. This is a positive change and I am confident the new system will benefit all students.

English School Rep

For creative writing students in the school of English there are some great developments on the horizon. Starting next year the MA course will allow a term long module taking place in Paris, an enticing prospect for anyone considering post graduate study. Furthermore plans are in place for a publication of stage 3 creative writing work that, if successful will set a precedent for next year, allowing students an outlet to get their work formally published. Finally the School of English will be collaborating with Sound New Contemporary Music Festival in May to

organize a companion poetry festival that should attract poets of international standing to Canterbury and the University.

In terms of resources, LiOn (Literature Online) one of the schools web resources will soon have a huge number of Penguin classics added to it's already large catalogue of materials. This will obviously be of huge help when it comes to getting hold of core material. Additionally more and more E-books are being added to the library to meet the demand for Eng-

lish core texts so there should be far less trouble with getting hold of reading material.

Although still being decided, it seems like there will also be a restructuring of modules throughout the School of English so as to allow far more choice in modules, particularly in stage 2, in response to students displeasure at having so few directions to go in.



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History School Rep



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Dear Humanities and History Students!

So a brief run down of all that has been going on within the School of History! It has been a busy few months with lots of essay writing and brilliant marks I am sure. We have had some really great successes in the School of late, the two careers events run by Prof. Mark Connelly, Tom Gillett and myself have been fantastic and really helpful to all students involved. The first was a great careers lecture from the Careers Advisory Service with History specific careers information, with a special section from Dr. James Baker about the benefits of voluntary

work. The second session was a CV workshop where students were able to bring along their draft CV and have it assessed and improved, a fantastic opportunity for those who struggle with it! The School is obviously proud of these events and the students grateful for the skills and advice they have given them. Our final careers session will be on the 6th April where we are having some of our Alums in high-powered jobs returning to the School to talk about graduate careers, recruitment and will be on hand to give advice.

Alongside this, myself and the History Society, Dr James

Baker, the British Cartoon Archive and the School of History have been organising a cartoon exhibition, which will run from the 29th March in the BCA space in the Library (just behind the café.) The exhibit is titled 'Pantomime Parliamentarians' and we encourage you all to come and see it! This is something both students and staff have been heavily involved in, and is a project we hope will happen again in future years.

I hope everyone is having a happy and successful term, and that essay/dissertation work is going well!

SECL School Rep

Hi, I am Priyanka and I am the representative for SECL and I am also the first year English Language and Linguistics course rep. During this academic year I have tried to encourage more interaction between SECL course reps from different years by organizing a SECL course rep meeting. I have passed on issues/concerns raised by course reps to the Director of Learning and

Teaching for SECL to ensure that they are resolved. I have attended various meetings-SSLC, Faculty Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee and Education Forum where I have represented the views of undergraduate students studying in SECL. I was involved with the Refreshers' Fair, the Teaching Awards and The Good, the Bad and the Ugly feedback campaign

run by the Union. As always, feel free to email me any issues or problems you have with your course or with the university in general and I will try my best to help you.



Priyanka Sinha

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What Kent Union's role in the fee-setting process has been. Lauren Crowley, VP Education

On the 7th March myself and Helen Wood attended a working group in the university set up to determine what the new tuition fee will be from 2012 and what the university will offer alongside it. The group is chaired by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and has several other members of senior management on it. Helen and I were asked to present to the group students' views on the matter and what position we would be taking over the next months during the release of the HE white paper.

Firstly we clarified to the group that Kent Union policy states that we oppose the rise in tuition fees and cuts to education, and all discussion that takes place should take this into context.

§ We expressed concerns that living costs are currently so high in the south east and students will have less cash flow day to day in the coming years. (CONTEXT – Under the new scheme, there will no longer be a minimum mandatory bursary and fee waivers of up to £3000 are strongly encouraged by the government, we feel that the fee waivers are about reducing the burden on the public purse rather than promoting fair access). We believe the concept of scrapping means-tested bursaries could have an extremely detrimental effect to widening access to students from low income backgrounds. Having a means-tested bursary system ensures that these students can afford to support their studies day to day and having a fee waiver could be a much stronger deterrent.

§ The group also discussed the idea of reduced accommodation costs as part of the package. Kent currently operates one of the most expensive accommodation systems in the country with some rooms on campus costing £180 a week. The current maximum maintenance grants do not cover this let alone allow money to live. We believe that a reduced accommodation package could be a positive move from the university and will eventually put more cash in the student's hand.

§ The group discussed the possibility of getting rid of hidden course costs. This is something that Kent Union have been lobbying the university for over the last few months. We expressed that we are advocates of a 'package deal' (an idea that came from the 'What would you expect for £9k?' consultation we did), paying a fee and getting everything as part of that. For example, module readers, core texts, printing credits and other things are being discussed. The university is currently investigating how much it would cost to carry this out.

§ We expressed that we did not want to see any department closures in the face of cuts and were assured that the university are not currently considering any.

§ We expressed that we are not in favour of differential fees, (we believe this will cause issues, e.g. 'if I pay more to do a Law degree than an English degree I should get a priority seat in the Library?') And similarly for the Medway campus is it feasible to charge such a large amount of money to study at a campus that is under resourced, and current students there express such dissatisfaction with? The group stated that they are also not in favour of differential fees, regardless of

department or campus and also admitted that to do so investment in the Medway campus will need to happen.

§ In light of all of the above, and the hundreds of students we have spoken to over the last six months on this topic, we believe that the university will have to charge above the break even point to allow for these recommendations. In the ideal situation, I'm sure I can speak on the behalf of a lot of people when I say we would all love a free/cheap education, or anything that burdens the student as little as possible but unfortunately we don't live in that world at the moment. I believe that the cause of widening access to Higher Education should be prioritised whilst securing as many new rights for students as we possibly can in the situation we find ourselves in.

WHAT IS STILL UNCLEAR:

§ Postgraduates – I raised the issue of postgraduate fees, having had the indication from the university that the fees are likely to rise in line with undergraduate fees and with a market currently already existing in the postgraduate market. With no system of loan support for postgraduates and a likely rise of fees, how will the university ensure that students can even continue into further study? The university is currently as unclear as we are on this.

§ Universities are still waiting guidance from the government/BIS on Part Time students and ERASMUS students on what the criteria for fee-setting for these students will be, as well as students that go on placement.