

Freshers' Week Feedback Forum – Report on HUS events

A survey was distributed in Michaelmas 2017 to allow feedback to be given on the experience of new arrivals during Freshers' Week. **59** responses were recorded, a substantial increase on last year. Therefore, it is hoped this document may prove a valuable resource to helping plan future events.

When asked to select their top three most popular events respondents overwhelmingly selected **matriculation dinner**, with 46 responses to this option.

Other notable successes were:

2. **Family Dinner** (33 responses)

3. **Bop** (28 responses)

4. **Pub Crawl** (27 responses).

At the other end, the film night offered on the night of the Bop received no responses. Casino night received just one response, and treasure hunt 2 responses.

Asked to identify events which could have been improved, **Subject Picnics**, the arrival day **Meet and Greet** in the Great Hall, **Treasure Hunt** and **Pub Crawl** provoked the most responses, in descending order.

The **Meet and Greet** event was critiqued as being limited in terms of mingling, and this could have been improved by running a more standing event. The long tables were described as 'restrictive', limiting conversation to 2-3 people around you. A common response was that it would better to be seated randomly, as you naturally knew the people on your corridor. Equally, the targeted nature of this question means there is no space for a response for anyone who may have enjoyed the chance to get to know their corridor better in the first instance. Only one response called for alcohol at this event, suggesting the initial balance of drinking and non-drinking was well done.

Improvements identified for the **subject picnic** included better designation of each subject area, and that it would have 'been nice to meet more students from the above years or even the tutors'. Better coordination, and structure could have improved this event.

The **treasure hunt** appears to have suffered from a lack of publicity, with a subsequent response revealing people would have taken part if they were aware of it. The advice for future **pub crawls** was to ensure multiple pubs were visited before Wetherspoons, and cost of some pubs was an issue.

More general responses included suggesting all events could have used more advertising, although subsequent responses included those stating 'I think all event were publicised really well' and 'advertisement of the events was really effective'

It is worth adding a caveat that some responses could be best described as frivolous rather than real criticism, with one respondent identifying the **Trivia Quiz** as needing improvement due to 'Unfair team name winners (no, I'm not still bitter...)', while another described the subject picnics as occurring too early for a hungover fresher.

A key aim of the HUS team this year was to ensure a good balance of **drinking and non-drinking events**, and of the 55 respondents to this question, 52 stated they felt there was a good balance. Only 3 respondents called for more drinking events.

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Particularly validating responses were that 'all tastes were catered for', 'as a non-drinker I never felt there was a shortage of events for me to go to' and 'it meant I met some people not by shouting at them in my alcohol voice'.

One comment was that the majority of drinking events offered seemed to be 'focussed on getting people very drunk'.

The **number of activities** offered this year appears to be a good level to aim for, with 88% of respondents opting for the response that HUS provided 'a good level of events', with 10% opting for 'nearly enough events' and only one respondent selecting that there were 'a few too many events'

In terms of **club nights** which HUS organised and sold tickets, the majority of respondents felt these were sufficient, but a large minority (~25%) felt one or two extra organised nights out could have been a positive. One criticism was ticket purchase did not guarantee entry, but this was beyond our control. It only underlines the need to ensure freshers arrive early for club nights next year.

On a more general topic, it appears **moving in** was achieved without many issues. Comments highlight the importance of the HUS and helpers in making this experience as pleasant as possible, being 'super helpful and welcoming'. The speed of getting to rooms was particularly appreciated.

Notable comments were that provision of instructions such as parking to be provided in advance could have been useful for the future, and that trolley provision could have been better.

Freshers' Week Feedback Forum – Report on Welfare talks and workshops

The **wellbeing talk** was well received, with the 61% finding it helpful or very helpful, and only 3 respondents finding it unhelpful, one comment being that the 'Best thing was it demonstrated how down to earth and approachable the HUS team are'

Despite some initial misgivings, the **balloon talk** on sexual health was well received. The majority of comments described it as both useful and enjoyable. It was described as a 'good way to introduce' issues. For the few who did not find it useful, they typically still described it as entertaining. Only one comment mentioned how the humour element detracted from some of the more serious aspects, and one suggestion was how to focus more on linking sexual health to intoxication.

Consent workshops also appear to have been a success, 65% of people viewing as a positive experience, and 29% neutral. Comments showed that experiences did vary, with some groups not being very talkative where others were. Attempts to create a more chatty environment rather than question and answer were proposed in comments, but I believe this was attempted, and really depends on if the group is able to engage in dialogue. One suggestion was to have fewer people per workshop, but working within the constraints of the size of the HUS team this would be challenging. Only one comment was especially negative, stating it tackled issues that were 'not appropriate discussing with strangers and hence were superficial'.

Freshers' Week Feedback Forum – Report on College talks and activities.

The initial **tutor group meetings** proved popular with 84% of respondents, only 16% not finding them useful. In spite of comments that the meeting itself was not particularly informative, it seemed to provide a good opportunity to meet people.

The **talks** provided in so far as possible appear to have generated a mainly positive response. In terms of spacing it would appear that a relatively good compromise has been reached. While some

responses called for the talks to be more tightly packed, to allow more days for socialising, others felt by spacing them out more it would have worked better. However, many responses felt it was spot on, or 'just about perfect' and 'it kept us interacting with people', while enabling one to take all the information on board. As expected, a few people responded they would prefer for them to start later, and that they would prefer for them to be condensed, or shorter.

The talks on safety and security, wellbeing and library tours all received very similar responses on terms of whether they were helpful or not, with the majority finding them useful. One comment from numerous responses was that aspects of the library tours were repetitive from those given in the library talk.

The **talks on preparing for academia** were, while not negatively received, adjudged to be the least helpful. Across the survey, comments revolved around the feeling it could be quite daunting, with the constant stressing of the workload, and expectations. Whether this is an unavoidable aspect of the Cambridge experience could be up for discussion in planning for future talks.

One logistical point from numerous questions is that some people found talks hard to hear on occasion, so in future it may be worth checking the volume is correct for each speaker.

Conclusions

This was the first week Homerton have had a longer fresher week, and the response from this survey is overwhelmingly positive. In the final question about the length, responses included:

'The fact that it is a WEEK rather than the paltry few days at other colleges is possibly the best part of the Homerton freshers' week.'

'Absolutely. I loved that it was longer than most of the other colleges as it meant we all had more solidified relationships before going into lectures and work.'

A common theme was that it was great to have a chance to get to know more people before work began.

Overall, the survey has highlighted more positives than negatives across the week. The importance of the whole HUS team cannot be overstated, but as always Freshers' Week can doubtless be improved. Suggestions from this year's cohort include having smaller activities to fill spare time, a board game tournament and a speed dating exercise
