

## Meeting with BA Geography students about the closure of their programme

Students in attendance: 20

Lily Rumsey (LSU President)

Roger Webster (Dean of Faculty: Media, Arts and Social Science)

Liz Sperling (Academic Manager: School of Humanities and Social Science)

Roger gave apologies Margaret Edwards (Director of School of Humanities and Social Science who was ill.

Roger stated that, for students on the BA Geography, he had made sure that all students were written to, with key questions on-line for students to access. He outlined reasons for this:

- Recruitment low for a number of years
- Funding arrangements that that Geography was subsidised for years by other courses
- The BA Geography was therefore unsustainable

With actual and soon-to-be-announced Government cuts and the Browne Review into Higher Education funding, LJMU had to take action and cut 10% from all budgets at Easter and plan for a further 25% to 35% in October. Part of this cost-saving involved voluntary redundancies, which some of the Geography team had applied for and been accepted. There was no ability to re-recruit after staff had left.

Roger had made the decision to close the programme this year, instead of next year as anticipated, in order to concentrate resources on level two and three students. This will allow a sensible student/staff ratio. Roger had no desire to close the programme but external influences (government cuts) had made it necessary.

Liz Sperling said that there should be no issues with continuing the quality of the programme as the great staff team were in place and all modules that had enough interest to run at the end of last year will run (some won't, but this is due to lack of interest and not due to the closure of the programme). Sarah is going to lead on the programme delivery, supported by Giles and Jim. Ian Cook will also teach on some modules.

Students had some questions:

1. If recruitment has been dipping recently, should something have been done 5 years ago instead of making a problem for students today?

Yes – targets have been reduced over the years and the entry requirements are not competitively high but recruitment performance was still too low.

2. Will further cuts hit Geography?

No guarantee but the intention is that all changes have been made

3. Will experience be hit by growing student groups?

The student/staff ratio is still not high – comparatively low compared to some programmes in the Faculty (about 20:1 in Geography and 40:1 in English). There should still be provision for the one-to-one support that students enjoy now. Although groups will grow slightly, they won't grow unusually.

Lily said that she would be meeting the Vice-Chancellor that afternoon and would raise the issues that students have mentioned.

4. Will the VC lead by example and put cuts/money saving in at the senior level?

There have been, and will be, redundancies/freezes/cuts at senior level – one example is that Roger is now the Dean of two Faculties and is leading them through a merger.

5. Will fieldwork in America and China both be possible?

Roger believes that for this year, both will be possible with Ian Cook leading work in China. For next year's fieldwork, the Faculty will assess demand closer to the time and run what it is possible to run although the Faculty will endeavour to maintain both

6. Is the only option total closure? Not partial withdraw?

Geography does already service other courses (modules run for more than one degree) but that doesn't solve recruitment problems.

Any further details or questions or comments on whether the Faculty is keeping quality high can be sent though Paul Boyham, the Faculty's independent Student Voice Co-ordinator at [p.r.boyham@2008.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:p.r.boyham@2008.ljmu.ac.uk)