

Cornwall Campus Open Day Review

Report prepared for
The University of Exeter

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Introduction

dh insight was asked by The University of Exeter to review the University's pre-application Open Day at the Cornwall campus on Saturday 4th October.

In our experience, we have found that the Open Day event is crucial in the university decision-making process, as it enables potential students to gain a feel for the institution as well as more detailed information on their area of study. A negative visit experience is the most commonly cited reason given by those potential students who have declined offers for becoming *less* favourably inclined towards an institution.

Ensuring that all controllable aspects of the event are properly planned and managed can make all the difference to a visitor's perception of the institution. As such, the Open Day provides an institution with an opportunity to impress potential students by presenting itself in the best possible light. The event can be used to highlight what makes it stand out from others, so that visitors come away with a good feeling about the institution.

Objective

The main objective of the project was to gain an insight into both the format and the experience of the pre-application Open Day from the student visitor perspective. This provides the University with a review of the student visitor experience and recommendations for the future improvement of its Open Days.

Methodology

A 'mystery shopping' approach was employed for reviewing the Cornwall campus Open Day event. Mystery shopping involves testing the levels of service by the use of third parties who adopt the guise of genuine visitors and subsequently record their experiences.

Two dh insight researchers posed as potential students and played this role from the initial stage of enquiring and registering for the Open Day, through the journey to the institution and the overall experiences of the day. This enabled the mystery shoppers to cover a greater range of activities taking place during the day. dh insight's mystery shoppers focused on the following aspects when evaluating the event:

- Pre-arrival information
- Arrivals/welcomes
- Finding your way around the campus
- General information talks/tours
- Departmental activities/programme
- General atmosphere
- Facilities
- Impressions of the area
- Feedback from other visitors

Reporting

The following section provides an overview of key themes raised in the research exercise, followed by suggestions of areas for further improvements by the University. The final two sections present the detailed experiences of the two researchers who attended the open day.

Overview

Pre-open day

- Overall, university staff provided excellent customer service.
- There were some problems, however, with online booking and downloading the open day brochure.

On the day

- First impressions were very good; we received a friendly welcome to the campus.
- Student marshals were particularly friendly and helpful despite the rain!
- The campus looked clean and well kept, although the men's toilets had taps missing and could have been cleaner.
- Directions/signage on campus were fine.
- Staff at the information fair and academic fair were approachable.
- There were plenty of printed material available and staff were willing to talk through leaflets with visitors.
- Timings of talks could have been better eg a five minute break between talks would have allowed visitors to get to the right building for the next talk in time.
- Academic presentations varied; Geography was very interesting using visual aids and a taster lecture. The History talk was interactive and enjoyable. Politics was less interactive and did not inspire confidence.
- General presentations; the finance talk was very helpful, though it was unclear who its intended audience was – parents or potential students. The UCAS talk, however, encountered some problems. The room was too small and the room we moved into was still too small; therefore people ended up standing and sitting on the floor. It was also rushed because of the talk taking place immediately afterwards.
- Student Life talk was not as interesting as expected. It appeared to be more of a marketing talk rather than something designed by students. There were also instances here, and in the other talks, that did not marry with the University's aspirations to be a top ten institution
- The campus and accommodation tour was a misnomer as the tour focused solely on accommodation. The large group size meant it was difficult to hear the guide and/or ask questions. More could have been made of the tour as we were only showed one student room/one kitchen and none of the other facilities on the campus.

Suggested Areas for Improvement

The following suggestions are based on dh insight's specific experience at the Cornwall open day and general experience of mystery shopping HEI open days over the past eight years. We are aware that some of the suggestions may have logistical and/or resource implications, which may make it difficult for them all to be implemented at this time.

Pre-open day

- Include a link to open days on the main University of Exeter home page.
- Include information on hotels and/or a link to the local tourist information office on the open day pages.
- Test the online registration software to ensure that it is functioning correctly.
- Provide an additional check to ensure that potential students are booked on the correct open day for their chosen course (ie Cornwall not Exeter).
- Provide accurate information regarding car parking opportunities on campus.
- Tailor the pre-arrival information to visitors ie enclose information on hotels and restaurants etc in the area.

Arrival

- Explore ways of handing out the evaluation survey towards the end of the day rather than at the beginning – or, better still, wait until the week following the open day and then send all visitors an email with a URL to an online evaluation survey.
- Move the welcome desk to a more prominent position in the reception area.
- Include start and end times for talks on the programme sheet. Allow time for visitors to move from one building to another between talks/tours.

Tours

- Cap numbers on individual tours so that visitors can engage properly with the tour guide. This would obviously have logistical implications as there may need to be more tours put on over the day.
- Ensure that tour guides are fully trained and able to answer questions concerning the campus and accommodation.
- Split the campus and accommodation tour into two separate tours.

- Allow more time for visitors to interact with current students in their accommodation – show more than one room.
- Train current students so that they are confident in talking to visitors about the accommodation (eg cost, atmosphere, amenities offered etc).
- Introduce a campus tour that shows visitors key facilities such as the library, lecture rooms, study areas, sports facilities etc.
- Encourage current students to be more present on the open days – not just official student ambassadors.
- Provide umbrellas with the University logo on them if the weather is inclement.

Talks/Presentations

- Ensure room size accommodates visitors.
- Make sure that an IT person sets up each PowerPoint presentation prior to speakers arriving.
- Check that there is a consistency of message across talks, especially between staff and student talks. Ensure that all those representing the University are aware of the University's objectives eg aspirations of being a top ten institution, equality of provision between campuses etc.
- UCAS talk – ensure that the focus is on potential students' needs rather than on internal processes.
- Finance talk – check that the content is comprehensible. Make it clear who the talk is targeted at – if appropriate, offer separate talks for parents and potential students.
- Subject talks – develop interactivity in all talks. Increase the role of current students within the talks. Encourage academics to think in terms of key selling points for courses.
- Student life talk – encourage current students to 'own' the presentation more, avoiding too much obvious marketing speak. Focus on the student experience in Cornwall.

Academic Fair

- Ensure that academic staff are available right through until the close of the day.
- Think about extending the day for an hour until 4 pm.

Detailed Findings – Researcher One

Website and Student Recruitment Office

The first thing that struck me about the homepage was that I couldn't find a link called 'Open Days'. From our experience of working with potential undergraduates we would recommend that such an explicit link be added.

I followed the Cornwall campus links through to the online booking page. I tried to download the pdf brochure but my PC wouldn't let me (this could be a limitation of my PC, rather than the brochure). However, I would have been discouraged from printing it off due to it being full colour – is it possible to have a version that is more printer friendly?

Following the booking online link I was asked to choose subjects of interest and picked History and Politics, from which I learned I could study in Exeter or Cornwall (though the former's Open Day was already fully booked).

The booking form was clear and straightforward to use. I declined the Falmouth tour by coach option and was disturbed to note that it took two and a half hours to reach the campus from Exeter by train.

I stated that I would arrive by car and was disappointed to learn that I would not be able to park on campus. However, the instructions and directions to the park and ride were clear. The confirmation email arrived very quickly and included the necessary information.

As I would be staying overnight I was pleased to see a link from the website to more information, including accommodation. However, when I clicked on this it took me back to the main Open Days page and there was no link for accommodation.

I phoned the Student Recruitment Office to get more information. The person on the other end of the phone was amenable and helpful and suggested a Premier Travel Inn. He also sent me another email that he assured me would have accommodation details on. This email turned out to be the same as the last one ie it took me to the Open Day webpage that had no such details.

Eventually I arranged accommodation through another source. It would have been very helpful if the University had a page of links to local hotels.

Three days prior to the Open Day I had not received any details in the post and phoned to check that they were on their way. The Student Recruitment Office was again very helpful but could not find my details on the system. In short, if I had not rung I would have not been registered.

Unfortunately I had to re-enter my details in the online form – it would have been easier for the University staff to have just taken my details and given me their assurance that I was now booked on. This time I received a second email which confirmed my registration. The member of staff also 'phoned me

back the next day to confirm I had received this information and personally sent out the information pack.

My overall impression was that the online system appeared to be a little clunky and not particularly user-friendly. The member of staff I spoke to suggested it was a 'glitch' which didn't fill me with confidence. However, the friendly manner and willingness to help of the Student Recruitment Office staff more than made up for this.

Arrival

Circumstances led to the hiring of a taxi to reach the campus. Upon arrival I was disappointed to see that I could have parked on campus (the online details stated in no uncertain terms that it would not be possible). This was irritating, especially as I had driven 330 miles to get there.

I was immediately met by two student marshals in bright yellow t-shirts who were very friendly and helpful. They gave me a timetable and a questionnaire, which seemed a little premature seeing as I'd just got there.

The marshals directed me to the reception building which appeared to be a cafeteria. Surprisingly, the reception desk was at the far end of the room, rather than by the entranceway, and so was not immediately obvious. As I walked to the desk I noticed another visitor already filling in his questionnaire.

Reception was straightforward and easy, and I got to meet the Student Recruitment Office staff member who had helped me over the phone. I was very impressed by the staff and student marshals throughout the day. There were lots of yellow shirts around the campus (though most did seem to unnecessarily be in the cafeteria) so there was always someone to ask. I noticed one marshal positioned outside for at least an hour in the downpour who managed to stay smiling throughout.

I approached a potential student and asked his first impression of the University. 'Smaller' was the full extent of his response.

The staff member announcing the accommodation tours etc with the use of a loud hailer was an effective idea.

My day was difficult to plan as there was no indication on the timetable I was handed as to how long the different talks, presentations and tours would last. If a timescale had been given I would have felt more comfortable and may not have felt the need to cram so much into my five hours.

Facilities

I used the Gents toilet at 10.15am (next to the cafeteria). The bin was full of hand towels (ie blue paper) which were spilling onto the floor and there were no taps on the hand basins. This didn't give a particularly good impression at the start of the day, though the sign informing us that the taps had been stolen by trophy hunters was quite amusing, and probably the best response the University could give in such a circumstance.

UCAS Application and Applying to Exeter Talk

This was the first presentation I attended. We were led off by Rachel in a yellow t-shirt. On the walk to the Peter Lanyon building I chatted to a family who were visiting as their daughter was interested in an English course. Unfortunately this was the one English course that was delivered at the Exeter campus; though it wasn't clear whether their attendance was due to a lack of clarity in the University's materials or whether the potential student just hadn't read them properly.

I soon found myself standing outside an accommodation block with several other visitors. Somehow we had managed to join another procession led by a dark haired woman in a yellow t-shirt. We made our apologies and went to our talk which, rather confusingly, had moved floors, and was now in a room marked 'Finance'.

Although I understood the importance of the talk, I'm not sure it gave the right impression. Firstly the room did seem unsuitable for such a large number of people, and those of us at the back found it difficult to read the PowerPoint presentation as we couldn't see the bottom half of it over people's heads.

Secondly the message given by the presenter was not altogether positive. There seemed to be an emphasis on how difficult the 'mammoth task' of admissions was, rather than focusing on the potential students. There was also reference to the 'alarming statistics' that showed how difficult it was to get into Exeter which did not come across as very encouraging.

There was some good advice, particularly regarding the writing of personal statements. There was a lot to take in, and as I arrived a little late due to my meander to the accommodation block, I wasn't sure if there was a handout. If there is no handout then it would certainly be useful to develop one.

I spoke to a parent at the end and he stated that having listened to the presentation he was 'more confused now.'

Finance talk

As the finance presentation was in the same room it was convenient for me to stay. The room emptied a little so I moved forward to a much better seat.

This presentation was first rate in my opinion. The presenter was very knowledgeable and gave a clear and useful delivery. Again there was a lot to take in, but the handout at the end made this less daunting.

I spoke to a parent afterwards (as it did appear to be aimed more at parents) who was similarly impressed, though he commented that all he wanted to know was 'how much it's going to cost for the three years'.

Accommodation and Campus tour

The 'Accommodation and Campus Tour' was a little misleading as we only got to see accommodation. I would have liked to have seen the Students' Union, the shop, the library, the computer facilities, the sports facilities etc.

Despite the rain the campus looked good, if a little deserted. Apparently the students had had a party the night before and were still in bed, but even by 2pm there were very few about.

All of us got soaked on the way to the accommodation and I couldn't help thinking it would be nice if the University supplied umbrellas. Our guide did give us some information but I couldn't hear any of it as she led us and spoke to the front. She was friendly and happy to answer questions, but I felt that she could have told us a lot more ie on the way back I went up front and asked questions which I felt would be interesting to all and she didn't really include the others in our party.

The accommodation itself looked remarkably clean and tidy. The three students in the flat said very little. They were happy to answer questions but I felt that they could have offered a lot more in the way of information. Again I had to push a little and there was plenty to interest the visitors other than the price of internet access for the year.

History talk

I went over to the History stand in the cafeteria and was very impressed that a lecturer took me to the talk himself, particularly as it was several flights up. I sat and waited for several minutes as the History staff struggled with the PowerPoint presentation, and then gave a brief introduction to the three year course. I learned little from this other than the content of the modules the presenter taught, as he admitted that he didn't know much about the others and asked the current students in attendance for confirmation on occasion.

Panic then set in as I realised we potential students were going to be separated from the parents and would be expected to take part in a seminar based task. I needn't have worried as the seminar was very interesting and attendees could be as interactive as they liked (I found it difficult not to be involved). I felt that this session was very effective in communicating the potential appeal of a course that I would otherwise be reticent to investigate.

The current students were involved towards the end and gave convincing accounts of what it was like to study History as a Combined Honours programme. The seminar leader discussed the Combined Honours opportunities at length, almost to the point of dissuading us from the Single Honours programme.

I did feel that the current students could have been used to a greater extent, perhaps by involving them more in the seminar task and demonstrating how they had learned to analyse the materials in their time at the University.

One area of concern was the seminar leader's suggestion that entry requirements are negotiable. This may be the case, but I wasn't altogether convinced that it was a message synonymous with being a top ten university.

Politics talk

The Politics talk was quite a contrast. There were only a handful of potential students and this time we were given what felt more like a lecture ie there was no interactivity.

As the staff struggled with PowerPoint yet again ('Let's look at some ads from the current campaign...if I can find them'), we were given a taste of what it would be like to study Politics at Exeter. Although the content was quite interesting, it didn't fill me with any excitement (as previously witnessed in the History session).

The staff provided an overview of the course and explained that it was new and small. They seemed almost apologetic as they explained that it meant that they had to try harder and that not being able to rest on their laurels should be seen as a strength. They mentioned that they had 'really small classes' and admitted, after having explained the programme, that they hadn't actually taught the third year yet, all of which did not instil confidence in the provision. There may be a way of turning this into a positive attribute, but telling students they will be one of three students in American Politics may not appeal to an 18 year old.

The staff made no reference to the Joint Honours option and when asked (by me) handed the session over to the current students and left (!). The students (who happened to be the same ones from the History session) were happy to discuss their time at the University so far and gave an impression of what our experience would be like, though I felt that they could have presented this information without relying on questions from the floor.

Altogether I did not come away with a positive impression of studying Politics at the Cornwall campus.

Student Life and the Students' Union talk

Initially this appeared to be a talk led by students about student life. However, it soon felt like a presentation put together by marketers (with picture postcards) and delivered by students, one of whom was no longer a student.

Much of the session was very effective and the presenters did well in making life on campus sound very appealing. They stressed the safety and security of the site, though also implied that it would only appeal to the type of student who would not want to go off-site.

The local area was described in an appealing manner and the presenters gave the impression that they experienced the best of both worlds. Every now and then they mentioned elements that added to the feeling that it was a small environment though ie there were three nightclubs, one of which was 'rubbish'.

One of the presenters proudly announced that she had come through Clearing, which would tend to oppose the Top 10 university status desired by the institution. She also added that she started at the campus without ever

having visited, and this had been preceded by a lengthy spiel on just how appealing it all was. Apparently this was repeated in her other session.

I felt that this session would have been more effective if it had been delivered by a mix of staff and students. The staff could give the more marketing-related information, and the students could focus on student life, thereby giving both elements more legitimacy. As it was it felt like a set agenda the presenters had to get through and that there was little in the way of spontaneity.

In general

The overall feel of the day was that it was a very pleasant, if perhaps a little sleepy, education environment. Without the students around it was very quiet and a little dull, though this may have had something to do with the foul weather.

Personally I didn't get the feeling that it was a top ten University due to the size of the campus – it felt more collegiate. This could very well be a strength, but there were mixed messages as to how much of a benefit or a disadvantage this was to students. For example, the statement that they can use the Exeter campus' facilities comes as little compensation when you realise it is two hours away.

The academic staff did not always give the impression that it was a top ten university either. The persistent difficulties with PowerPoint, the lack of knowledge in some areas, such as certain modules and Joint Honours, did not always encourage me to apply.

The students, by and large, were very positive and effective in attracting visitors. There were lots of yellow t-shirts and they were all friendly and willing to help.

As researchers we are overly critical. We both came away with a good feeling about the Open Day, and as I was leaving I asked another potential student about her experience. She had journeyed down from Manchester and was very impressed with everything she had seen. She added that she was previously unsure and that now she would definitely apply as she had really felt like she would fit in.

Detailed Findings – Researcher Two

Student Recruitment Office

I phoned the Student Recruitment Office number, which I easily found on the website. I phoned on the 12th September, so around three weeks in advance of the open day. The woman I spoke to was very helpful and friendly, answering all my questions immediately. First I asked which train station was the nearest to the University. I was told that I needed to get a train to Truro station and then from there change to Penryn train station. She said the University was roughly a ten to fifteen minute walk from the station. I was also told about a bus I could get from Truro that would take me to the campus.

I then asked what time the day started and I was told it started at ten o'clock in the morning and finished at three o'clock in the afternoon. She also informed me of various talks that were being held throughout the day, including subject talks and student life talks. I was then asked if I wanted to book myself on the open day, however I explained that I had not yet decided whether I would be attending due to the long distance. In reply to this, she explained that there was much more information on their website that I could look at and then if I chose to attend the open day I could easily book my place online.

For the purpose of the mystery shopping exercise it was agreed that one researcher would book online and one by phone. I therefore phoned back two weeks later asking to book a place on the open day over the phone. I explained that I did not have internet access and the person I spoke to at the Student Recruitment Office was very accommodating. She told me that there was an online booking form and that she could fill it out for me. She took me through the form step by step until it was completed and then she explained that I would get some material through the post as I did not have internet access at home. I was also told there was plenty of information on the website if I had access to the internet before the open day.

Information available before visit

I received an information pack a couple of days before the open day. This included a map of the campus, the open day brochure, a registration card and social guide of the area surrounding the campus. While this was all helpful, I would have appreciated a small restaurant guide which would have been very useful for my visit. As I had to travel a reasonable distance to the open day I stayed in a hotel in Falmouth. This was my first visit to the area and therefore I was clueless about where I could eat etc. The social guide sent in the information pack focussed on sports activities, shopping and nightlife for students living in the area rather than for visitors.

Arrival

I arrived by taxi at the Cornwall campus just before 10am. When I arrived, I was welcomed by two students. Both were friendly and helpful as they took

my registration slip and directed me to the main room. I was also given an open day evaluation questionnaire, which I thought may have been slightly premature.

The main room, where there was plenty of tea and coffee, looked clean and well looked after. This room was where the information point/registration staff were, however it was not entirely clear where they were situated because they were seated at the far end of the room from the entrance.

Unlike Matt's experience of the Gents, the women's toilets were fine. The free tea and coffee was good, especially because of the cold and wet weather and for those who had travelled far on the day. Both Matt and I did not have a chance eat lunch on the open day due to the busy schedule; however the canteen was open and looked as though it offered a variety of food.

The student marshals were extremely helpful and friendly. They were approachable and very happy to talk about their experiences at the Cornwall campus and student life. There were plenty of them around, wearing yellow t-shirts, so they could always be easily identified. They seemed very pleased to be there helping and kept smiling despite the awful weather. They were happy to take you to other buildings in the pouring rain and they were often stood in the rain checking no-one was getting lost. Furthermore, when I was sat on my own having a ten minute break, a student marshal came and sat with me and we had a quick chat about the day etc. Although most students come with their parents, some come by themselves and so it can be a bit uncomfortable when you feel everyone else has someone to chat with about the day, so I thought this was a really nice thing to do. While these students were helpful and more than happy to talk about the campus, there were no other students around. It would have been good to see students going about their normal routine at the campus. It would have given the campus more 'life' as it appeared to be a bit of a ghost town.

The directions and signage on campus was adequate but I found it much easier to talk to the student marshals because there were so many of them happy to take you to the place you wanted to go and you got to chat to them on the way which was good.

Info/Academic Fairs and Tours

As mentioned earlier, the registration stand was not the easiest to find – it was expected to be at the front of the room rather than at the back. However, when it was located, the staff at this point were friendly and helpful. The info fair was easily approachable and again friendly. This was a chance to ask more questions in detail. I asked about accommodation and a member of staff talked me through some printed material that included everything I needed to know. There was plenty of printed material on the day which was useful because it was not always so easy to ask staff due to the amount of visitors there also wanting to ask staff things. The subject material and the accommodation material were particularly useful.

Matt and I had a very busy schedule for the day because we went on as many talks and tours as possible; therefore the only opportunity we found to go to the academic fair was at 2.45pm. Disappointingly, there was no-one there which meant that we were unable to speak with academic staff.

The campus and accommodation tour only consisted of an accommodation tour and this was disappointing as I was only able to see one student room and one kitchen. The groups were far too big. When I had my accommodation tour there was probably a group of 20-25 people all wanting to see one room and the kitchen. This made it difficult for the guide to speak to everyone and give the information that they needed. The result was that lots of people were asking questions and many were the same ones. As there were too many people on the tour, it was difficult to look at the bedroom and kitchen properly. This made it hard to grasp what it would be like to live there as a student.

I noted in my group that the guide was walking at the front of the group with a small group of mainly parents around her asking questions. The danger here is that potential students visiting on their own would find it hard to get the same information, particularly if the guide has their back to the rest of the group.

It was really disappointing not being able to see any other facilities on campus, for example sports facilities, the library and where the different departments were etc, as it meant that it was difficult to imagine living there as a student. If one of the university's aims is to become a top ten university, then the standard of facilities available to students needs to be shown off. It is hard to decide whether the campus has a top ten 'feel' about it if you cannot see any of the facilities, especially study resources such as the library and the different departments.

Academic Presentations

Geography

I attended the geography presentation, which I thought was very impressive. The visual aids during this talk were good; firstly because they displayed the expertise of the subjects' lecturers and secondly because they broke up the talk and kept it interesting. For example there was one video clip that was particularly inspiring, this was a clip of one their geography lecturers doing some research which was recorded by the BBC. The talk was also well organised as it started off with an introduction to the course, which involved all the information about course modules, the types of geography courses offered and future employment.

The second part of the talk was a 'taster' lecture. This gave an insight into the type of topics that would be covered and it showed off the highly specific software that students would use, giving potential students an idea of how studying geography at Cornwall would be. The lecturer who gave this part of the talk appeared to be highly knowledgeable in his field of study, as he gave an introduction to his career and his experience in different parts of the world. I believe that there were students there who briefly talked about their dissertations at the very beginning of the presentation, however I missed the

first five minutes because of the previous talk over running (this is mentioned in more detail in the ‘timings’ section). Despite being late I was nicely welcomed into the talk.

Both speakers were very good at communicating how the department was focused on the quality of its teaching. This created a good feel about the department because you really sensed their dedication to the quality of teaching and to their students’ progression. Because of this, you were able to imagine what it would be like to be a geography student there.

The lecturer emphasised that the undergraduate courses were led and taught by world class academics and that there were few postgraduate teachers. They also talked about the student – staff ratio, again highlighting the quality of teaching. The lecturer touched on the fact that the department had research led teaching. Previous research by dh insight has shown that potential students are often wary of the idea of research led universities, believing it to mean that lecturers are more concerned with their own research career rather than their students’ education. However, the lecturer handled this topic very well, turning it into a positive aspect of the department. The clip by the BBC was used to demonstrate the advantages of research led teaching, explaining that the research is incorporated into the undergraduate study, giving students a cutting edge and first hand experience.

The presentation involved video clips of the many field trips that the course offers, such as New York, Cornwall and the Pacific North West, which was again appealing. The speakers also concentrated on the ‘unique environment’ of Cornwall which was perfect for geographers. It became clear that this was obviously an attractive location for anyone serious about studying geography.

The talk touched on future careers and employability which was helpful as previous research by dh insight has illustrated the importance of career progression for potential undergraduates in their university decision-making. Again this was an impressive part of the talk as it highlighted some of the career destinations of recent graduates from Cornwall. It was also explained how the courses’ assessments are geared to the world of work, developing students’ employability skills.

The entry grades for the geography department have now been raised due to the popularity of the course. The speaker referred back to the quality of teaching focus by saying that, although it is popular, they do not want to ‘cram’ students in as that would take away the quality. This gave the impression that the department was progressing and becoming harder to get into because it was such a good course that provided good skills for graduate employment. Overall, this presentation fitted well with the University’s aspiration of wanting to become a top ten university.

General Presentations

UCAS application

The UCAS application and applying to Exeter talk was disorganised. We had to move rooms because the initial room was too small. However the room we moved into upstairs still did not accommodate the amount of people. Therefore many people were standing or sitting on the floor, which is not something you would expect. Also because of the amount of people it was hard to see the presentation, especially if you were seated at the back like me. The person giving this talk was very apologetic and told us that she would upload the presentation onto the university's website so that we could look at it properly at another time.

This talk was scheduled before a subject talk but visitors had not been given information on the time it would end. As many people wanted to attend a subject talk, there were numerous questions asking when the presentation would finish, as they did not want to miss the subject talk. This meant that the person giving the presentation rushed through it so that she did not over run and delay those wanted to attend a subject talk. In terms of content, the talk was delivered from the admissions office's point of view rather than from the potential applicant's and it made it gave the impression that the University was very hard to get into.

On my return, I tried to find the presentation on the website after being told on the day that it would be uploaded onto the University's website; however I could not find it. I therefore rang the Student Recruitment Office to ask where it was on the website. I explained what happened on the day and the person on the other end of the phone was very apologetic about it. She did not know about the presentation or where it would be on the website; however, she took my name and number and said she would find out from the person who delivered the presentation. About two hours later she rang back and said she had got hold of the person in charge of the presentation and told me it would be on the website by the end of the week. I found this person very helpful and friendly. Since being told that the presentation would be soon on the website I have been checking but have not found it on there.

Student Life

The Student Life and the Students' Union talk was not as interesting as expected. It seemed to be more about living in Cornwall than being a student there; a subtle, but important difference. It also felt as if it was more of a selling talk prepared by a marketing team rather than a talk devised by students. In addition, the second year student explained that she had gained a place through Clearing as her A Level grades had been poor and had not even visited the campus prior to enrolling. This did not give the best impression to potential students, considering one of the University's aims is to become a top ten university (the assumption being that a top ten university would not offer a place through Clearing). The comments made by this person strongly differed to the talk delivered by the admissions office, who concentrated on the difficulty of getting a place at the University. Having

attended both of these talks I was left slightly confused as to whether it would be a hard place to get into or not.

Timings of the day and opening hours

The opening hours were fine although we expected people at the academic fair to stay there until 3pm. Furthermore, Matt and I did not have a proper break all day because we were constantly attending the talks, so perhaps the day could go on for an hour longer to give visitors a sufficient break. We recognise that normal visitors might not attend as many talks as we did, but at the same time they might if the day was more spread out with allocated 'break times'. With regards to timings I experienced some glitches, for example I attended the UCAS application talk at 12.30 pm and wanted to go to the geography talk at 1pm. The UCAS talk finished at 1pm and I needed to get to another building for the geography talk. Therefore the timing of these talks could have been better or they could have been in the same building to save time. In this case it was lucky that a student marshal was prepared to take me in the heavy rain straight to the geography presentation. However as a result of these timings the speaker in the UCAS talk rushed through the information and I was late for the geography talk where I think I missed the geography students' contribution, which I would have liked to have seen.