

## **An Analysis for Hidden Course Costs in College of Arts 2014/15**

Within term two of the academic year 2013/14, comments about the cost of printing within the College of Arts were brought to the Students' Unions attention. These comments encompassed the idea that there were students who felt that without spending money on printing their work a certain way, they would fail. These comments led to a 'Hidden Course Costs' Manifesto point in several candidates manifesto's who ran for election for positions within the College of Arts. It was then raised as a motion at Student Council for the Students' Union to campaign on, passing unanimously.

During the last two weeks in October 2014, the senior representatives and Sabbatical Officers created and executed twenty hours of Student Voice Activity with four questions, in areas of the AAD building, MHT building, the LPAC and the library, directed only at College of Arts students. Over 900 students from the College of Arts participated with this Student Voice Activity, indicating that this is something that students want to discuss with other students and staff.

The first question was, 'before you came to University how much did you think you would spend on printing?', in order to see what information had been communicated, and what expectations students had from when they were finding out about their course and the University of Lincoln. The second question was about now that they were here, 'how much were you expecting to spend on printing in the coming year?' This was to test whether their expectations were matched as well as capture actual spending within the college. The third question was about finding out what they would want to happen with the current print system – "if we could change it, what would you like to see" – and this was so that a solution could be taken forward. The options for solutions were informed by previous research from the school representatives as well as national research such as Pound in your Pocket. For instance, keeping the costs and credit the same indicated there was no issue, reducing the costs indicated that the students were finding it too expensive, increasing printing credit indicated that the students would like more support from the University and releasing credit termly could indicate budgeting issues. A final round off question was 'What they thought about printing costs?' in order to give the students a space to tell us their open thoughts on this topic.

### Summary of recommendations

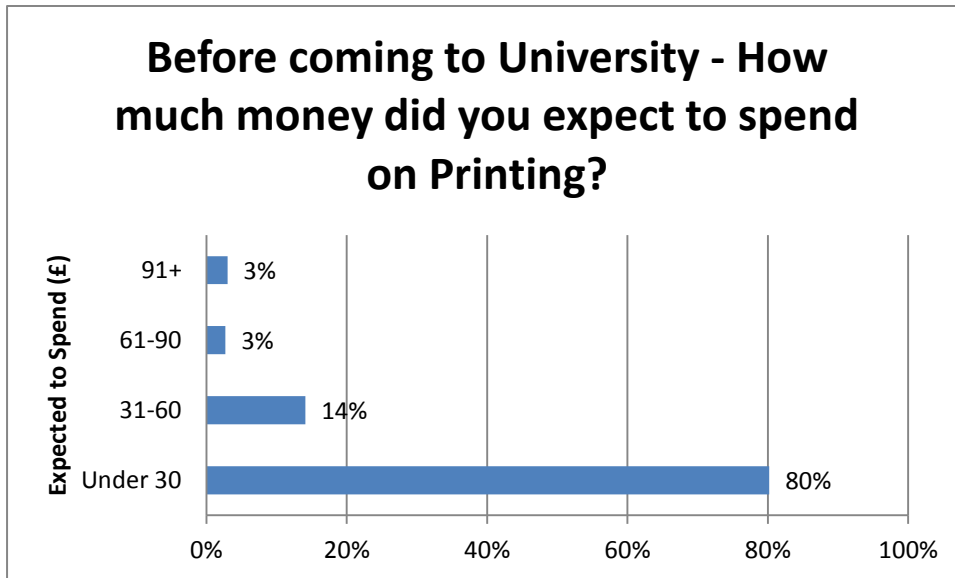
Review information on costs in prospectus

Review printing credit given to students with the aim of increasing the amount of credit given as soon as possible.

Consider the costs of the types of assessment used through the periodic review programme. We want to encourage cost effective and diverse ways of assessing students, while being careful not to discourage the diversification of assessment

within the college. I.e. when costs are associated with certain assessments there should be adequate support provided.

Question One: Before coming to University – How much money did you expect to spend on Printing?



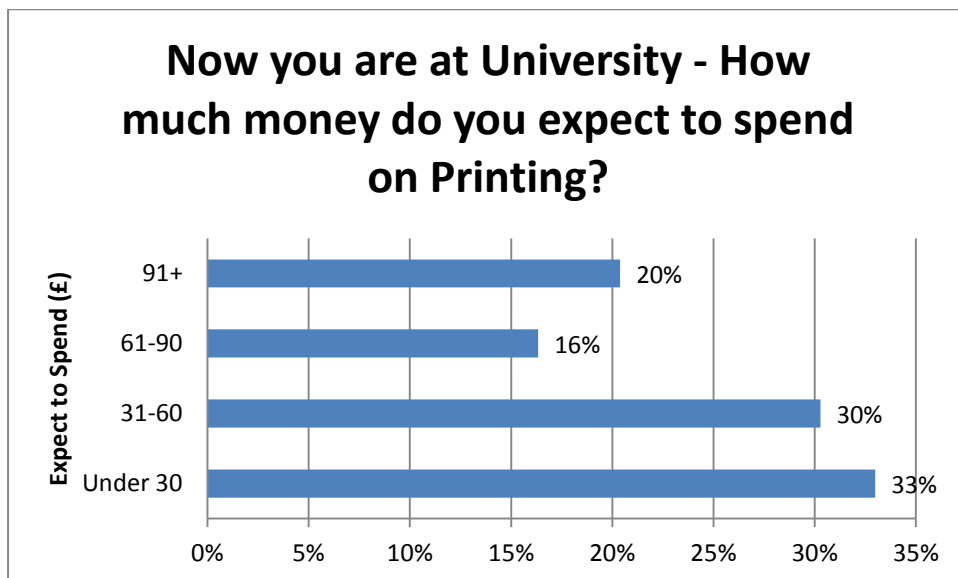
The graph above shows one of four questions that we asked students about their expectations with regards to spending on printing before coming to University – essentially about whether the University managed their expectations when they were prospective students. It's clear to see that the majority of respondents -80% of 667 -believed they would spend under 30 pounds on printing – and from the conversations held when the questions were asked most of these respondents believed it would actually be free due to their tuition fees, for instance “Paying £9000 shouldn't be paying anything that the University requires us to print”, “£9000 should cover costs” and a further “Didn't expect to have to pay at all at University.” The factor of the higher tuition fees was mentioned many times vocally and as comments to the fourth question and will be discussed further in the document. Very few students had a 'realistic' view on how much they would spend on printing for assignments, scripts and projects before arriving at University, for instance one student on the Masters of Architecture stated that they,

“Expected to spend more than their Undergraduate degree (studied at University of Greenwich) but it is even more than expected...was £150, we get £15.00 credit and today, I have spent £22.00 on printing.”

Additionally, several students who participated stated that they thought the printing costs would be cheaper, similar to the costs that they paid when at school or college,

“£1 per week at school, more than I got for £9,000”, and “used to be 1p black and white or 3p colour at college”.

Question Two: Now you are at University – How much money do you expect to spend on Printing?



The above shows the results for the second question of what they expect to spend on printing now they're at University – essentially whether the University met their student expectations. Again 667 students took part in this question and as we can see when compared with the previous group, 47% of those who thought they would spend under 30 pounds on printing have moved into higher money brackets. The upper three brackets have gone from having between 3% and 14% of respondents expecting to pay these numbers, to a range of between 16% and 30% of respondents expecting to pay these figures now they're at University. The students who are estimating the upper bracket of spending have calculated the costs for work they know they need to print between now and the end of the year. One Fashion Third year worked out, “50 pages, A3 portfolio at 50p a go is £250 for a compulsory portfolio”, and another student stated that they “have to pay for projects £240 a term,” in order to complete their course. Other students within Design courses said

“large format printer is too expensive”

“Birmingham is £2 for plotter – why is it double here?”

Another theme which ran through the conversations with students alongside this question was that many of them have bought their own printer as it is cheaper long term,

“Do at home now as it cost too much.”

Other comments reflected the high costs on requested reading from staff,

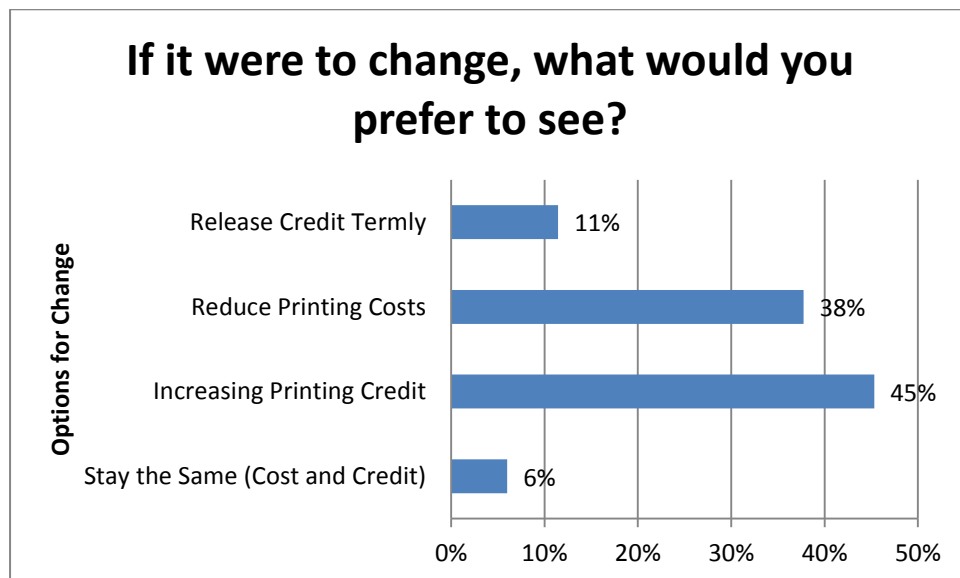
“Dissertation and scripts are too much,”

“Expectations to print weekly seminar reading – we can't do that!”

indicating that these students may be printing materials which necessarily aren't needed to be printed.

Although 33% of respondents are expecting to pay below 30 pounds for printing for the year ahead, 66% of respondents are paying over this money bracket, and the question with this is whether these costs are practical for students to pay – especially when it's for needed printing such as projects or assignments. The students who responded felt not so much, as can be seen in the below graph.

Question Three: If Printing Costs were to change, what would you prefer to see?



On this question we had 951 respondents of which only 6% of students stated that they wanted the printing system, costs and credit to stay the same. Five percent more wanted to see the credit they are given, split and released termly- but this was mainly students who were given a larger amount of credit at the start of the year.

Different views were brought to the activity by students who might prefer a different solution such as

“Schools should be more transparent about where costs are – and realise students don’t have enough money to always go and buy/print books etc”

“St.Martin’s told you when you applied how much you would spend” - a third year student

indicating that they were more transparent which many of the students we spoke to also stated.

The two provided options that saw the most conversation and selection were reducing printing costs, which 38% selected, and increasing printing credit, which 45% selected. Many of the students who took part in this question stated that they couldn’t decide between the two and would prefer to see both be implemented by the University – both value for money (reduction) and a security cushion (more credit) be present for them as students. However, as they only had one vote each, when asked to choose just one we can see that increasing credit was the option that was favoured most.

#### Question Four: What do you think of printing costs?

The final question we asked students for input was, “What do you think of printing costs?” and as previously mentioned this question was open for comment rather than providing options. The full set of replies can be seen as Appendix two to this document starting on page seven. The comments appeared to have seven different themes present;

- cost of tuition fees/free,
- match needs – personalisation,
- quality of print/system,
- expensive costs,
- questions of transparency,
- high expectations on students,
- positive/constructive comments.

The cost of tuition fees has been mentioned above but the match needs/personalisation per course was an interesting point to note that had been made by respondents. It was interesting to see that not only did students agree that other courses may be in more need of lower costs or increased credit than they might but it was also apparent that there didn’t seem to be the knowledge that within the College the amount of credit is not universal as in other Colleges. For instance, the typical University breakdown is £5 for first year, £10 for second year, £15 for third year. However within the College of Arts due to a recognition by staff, the system is more asymmetrical by course and school– a breakdown of which can be seen at Appendix one. Most students believed they only got £5 in each year and

weren't sure what they were allocated. Some respondents were unsure how to use the printers, highlighting a need to better inform students during induction.

The quality of print and system is linked to expensive costs in most comments made for these themes. Students made comments such as "Have to test print due to quality issue" or one student from Architecture and Design stated that "...affects work quality as concentrate on print rather than the work" and "Maintenance is the issue- waste credit when printer issues happen" indicating a loss of value for money due to perception of not having the quality they need.

It is important to note that staff did not take part in the research but commented while the activity taken place with a lecturer from the school of Architecture and Design summarising the broad contribution: "It's a disadvantage to student when you request them to print everything – too expensive."

### Conclusion

To conclude, we had over 900 College of Arts students take part in this Student Voice Activity, and the majority indicated a degree of disappointment with the current situation for them with regards to printing costs. The goal of the Student Voice Activity was to discover whether there was unhappiness within the student body of the College with regards to the amount they were spending on printing, and the evidence provided shows that this has been proven. Now, we have moved beyond knowing the issues to what the students' would like the solution to be. Going forward we will be working with the College to address the issue and hope to achieve a long term solution of increased printing credit within the College of Arts to avoid the presence of Hidden Course Costs for future years and students – new and returning.

**Appendix One:**

Current Printer Credit Table for College of Arts students.

<b>School</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Credit Amount</b>	<b>No Students</b>
Additional Architecture Credit - 30/10/2014	1	15	100
Additional Architecture Credit - 30/10/2014	2 and 3	85	133
Additional Audio Production Credit - 30/10/2014	1	5	28
Additional Contemporary Lens Media Credit - 30/10	1	15	31
Additional Contemporary Lens Media Credit - 30/10	2	10	23
Additional Contemporary Lens Media Credit - 30/10	3	5	37
Additional Creative Advertising Credit - 30/10/20	1, 2 and 3	30	115
Additional Design for Exhibition and Museums Cred	1	32	7
Additional Design for Exhibition and Museums Cred	2	102	5
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	1	45	86
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	1 split	17.5	19
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	2	40	106
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	2 split	20	23
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	3	35	88
Additional English Credit - 30/10/2014	3 split	22.5	1
Additional Film & TV Credit - 30/10/2014	1	5	55
Additional Graphic Design Credit - 30/10/2014	1	35	59
Additional Graphic Design Credit - 30/10/2014	2	30	73
Additional Graphic Design Credit - 30/10/2014	3	85	43
Additional History Credit - 30/10/2014	1	45	137
Additional History Credit - 30/10/2014	1 split	17.5	11
Additional History Credit - 30/10/2014	2	40	86
Additional History Credit - 30/10/2014	2 split	20	15
Additional History Credit - 30/10/2014	3	35	56

Additional Illustration Credit - 30/10/2014	1	15	49
Additional Illustration Credit - 30/10/2014	2	10	53
Additional Illustration Credit - 30/10/2014	3	35	34
Additional Interactive Design Credit - 30/10/2014	1 and 2	25	24
Additional Interactive Design Credit - 30/10/2014	3	10	16
Additional Interior Design Credit - 30/10/2014	1	32	20
Additional Interior Design Credit - 30/10/2014	2	67	21
Additional Interior Design Credit - 30/10/2014	3	103	19
Additional Jewellery Design Credit - 30/10/2014	2 and 3	10	15
Additional Journalism Credit - 30/10/2014	1 and 3	20	137
Additional Journalism Credit - 30/10/2014	1 and 3 split	10	27
Additional Journalism Credit - 30/10/2014	2	40	54
Additional Media Production Credit - 30/10/2014	1	5	220
Additional Product Design Credit - 30/10/2014	1	20	24
Additional Product Design Credit - 30/10/2014	2	15	32
Additional Product Design Credit - 30/10/2014	3	10	33
Additional Public Relations Credit - 30/10/2014	2	20	18
Additional Public Relations Credit - 30/10/2014	3	40	17
Additional Public Relations Credit - 30/10/2014	2 split	10	9



## **Appendix 2**

Student thoughts on current practise:

Cost of Tuition Fees/Free

£9,000 a year and you can't pay for ink? (17 agreed)

Free Printing – I pay £27,000 (1 agreed)

Would like to see costs reduced

Reduce costs

Bought my own printer- it was much cheaper

Just add it to my £27,000 bill...

Ridiculously expensive on top of University fees

The added expenses aren't fair on us

Far Too Expensive

Ridiculous!!

Scrap the Cap

It's annoying!

Free-we pay £9,000!

We pay high rate tuition!

Most University design courses don't charge for them printing! We pay £9,000 for what?

on top of the £9,000

Make it free!!

We already pay to be here

Should be free

why should I pare more than £9,000 plus

Pile of Rubbish

We are already strapped for cash so it doesn't help having to pay more for printing

Scrap them!

First Year History- "£1 per week at school, more then I got for £9,000"

£9,000!

Only charge for excessive printing

Around 28 people thought printing would be free

Paying £9,000 shouldn't be paying anything that the university requires us to print

Print work for degree shows for photography

More than expected

Wasn't expecting to pay for printing

£9,000 should cover costs

Unlimited free printing

Doesn't work as you can't tell exactly what you'll need to print free assignments  
dissertations

Personal printing could be charged but compulsory should be free

£9,000

Want it to be free

Unnecessary (2 agree)

Odd that we get charged

, but we shouldn't have to pay

Ridiculous (x2)

Already poor

Daylight robbery

Spend all this money for university and now this!

Should be free for the fees we pay

Should be free!

£6,000, not gaining anything- printers would help as spend too much already

Things we have to print must be free

Free printing please

Black and White should be free

Reading should be provided

Didn't expect to have to pay at all at university

Should be free

Should be free for small (A4) but not for big (A3)

Mailbox (bar) print for free – with no purchase

Costs should be free depending on the course

Imagined it would be free for freshers!

Imagined it would be free- should have been told about hidden costs before university

Course related costs included

International students pay more anyway

Should be free

Compulsory print outs should be free

It's a joke

Steep considering you spend £9,000 a year for £15 credit

It's Unrealistic

£9,000

Feel a bit ripped off

We pay £9,000 per year

Sheffield University:

- Library Costs Removed
- Staff in media
- Look into profitability
- 

Match needs-Personalise

Amounts need to match the NEED – more where it's needed less where it isn't-  
course by course (5 agreed)

Also considerate of time or year- e.g. dissertation = a lot of printing – different  
amount per term

Design courses need more credit and better quality printers

Our whole course revolves around printing- give us more!!

but same Art and Design courses should have an increase in print credit  
and increase amount per student of start of year  
2 Month's into term and I have already topped up 3 times  
Digital work!  
Art/design should get discounted printing  
General 3<sup>rd</sup> year issues  
£30 Creative advertising not given £10 as top up  
Product Design – the whole course replied annual printing – there's an allowance  
but even that sometimes isn't enough  
English and Journalism Third Years – Loads of money  
Art and Design – have big issues with printing costs  
Depends on course and modules – Credit that is given is good  
Credit should be given by course, Architecture is expensive  
Varies from course to course, requirements of learning materials vary  
Want the school to talk to library about how much printing they require and  
negotiate the price  
More credit in Journalism due to course printing needs (4 agree)  
People who need to do more get more credit (Depending on subject)  
Varies from course to course  
Forced printing for course  
More awareness of how much we get and when per course (English 3<sup>rd</sup> year)  
Tailor made credit per course  
Photography no longer has to pay so that is go  
Costs should be free depending on the course  
Don't cater for how much work increases in the third year  
Arts printing spate from the rest of university  
Printer credit to coincide with deadlines  
Architecture given extra credit

Turnit in should be used more

Quality of Print/Printer/System

Quality of printers is not good enough!

Keep the same price if the quality is improved

Printing system/IT is not dependable-blank prints!

Various Pricing on the Printer!

Printer should work properly!

£5 is reasonable price for cartridge/colour printer but not for the pellet one

Not good enough Print Quality (2 agreed)

Quality of print isn't very good (1 agreed)

Fashion Third Year- "Printers printing with lines, worries that it will affect the mark given"

Maintenance is the issue – waste credit when printer issues happen

Better quality would change attitudes

More options rather than Black and White/Colour. E.g. High quality Prints

Print from home should be easier

Wouldn't want to rely on university printers due to prices and quality

Not great quality for what you pay

Easier system to use (2 people agreed)

Quality of paper should be better!

More printer maintenance – aligning print needs

Have to test print due to quality issue

People are wasting money on printers that do not work

Expensive

Colour Printing is too expensive- particularly A3

Expensive uses a lot of my loan

University should give us more money!

Expensive, Really expensive, Too Expensive

Needs to be cheaper!

Extortion- far too much brought on A3- Inkjet to help!

Unfair costs in some areas

£10 at the beginning of the year is pathetic

Too high, and not enough on floors

A0=£5, 10 x A0 = £50 and other printing = ridiculous

A little too expensive

It's a rip off

Birmingham is £2 for plotter- why is it double here?

Not enough allowance to print off

I had to buy my own printer because it was more cost effective! (4 agreed)

Too High!

More Credit Please

More Credit and Reduced pricin

Masters of Architecture- "Expected to spend more than undergraduate (University of Greenwich) but it is even more than expected. Which was £150, we get £15 credit and today, I have spent £22 on printing"

Birmingham is £2 or £3 for a plotter

First year interior Architecture Student pays between 31-60 pounds

Architecture 1<sup>st</sup> year "Spent over £100 already"

Play writing (MA) some paying for papers

More credit per term (2 agreed)

Dance got £15 – used it in five weeks

Quite a few use own printer

Fashion Third Year- "50 pages, A3 portfolio at 50p a go is £250 for a compulsory portfolio"

Colour is expensive

Try not printing as too expensive

Colour should definitely be cheaper

Expensive

Fairly high especially for colour or multiple pages

Too expensive, mainly colour

Do at home now as it cost too much

Colour is too expensive

Easier to print Black and White

A lot of people have their own printer (5 agreed)

2 x dissertations and media production need to be in colour

Reduce- used to 1p black and white or 3p colour at collage, and someone else paid 5p for black and white and 12p for colour

Black and white should be free- colour you should pay 10p for 2 sheets and 10p for double sided

/ too expensive

Have to pay for projects £240 a term

Not value for money

Large format printer is too expensive

Expensive

Print a lot= adds up

Colour is too much

Colour on plot is too much

Annoying if only printing on a part of the page

Use own, as it is more convenient

Use home because have to pay at university

Becomes 'not enough' further into university

Use own, or use other people's printers

could be better – double sided should be same price

posters/plot is expensive

Majority of print reading should be free

Dissertation and scripts are too much

Is a bit too high (especially colour) – 2 agreed

Discounted paper/ink- people own their own

Double sided should be cheaper

We need more credit

Differentiate between paper size, cost on plotters

Colour printing is too expensive; there is no difference if it is double sided

Cheaper to buy own printer but less practical

Surprised at cost in the library

Doing things to gain printing credit

Deals on printing (cheaper places in town)

Printing materials cost

Printing credit and per scale- large scale print £5+

Try not to print at university

Should carry over credit

Give colour for the same price

Buying a printer is way cheaper

Used to be 1p at school not 5p

Questions of what paying for/transparency

Schools should be more transparent about where costs are- and realise students don't have enough money to always go and buy/print books etc... (1 agreed)

Use money for a printer in our own area!

Be more transparent before University at start of year- so that people know what to expect

If you want us to print something either provide it or provide the credit for it



Increase the credit on printing

What's the £9,000 for?

What are we even paying for?

Where's the £9,000 gone?

£9,000 a lot to pay where is the money going?

High Expectations of students

Expectations to print weekly seminar reading- we can't do that!

So many sheets to print!!

Fashion 3<sup>rd</sup> year – “St Martin's told you (when you applied) how much you would spend”

Majority of print reading should be free

Tablets allowed across the board please (Drama 3<sup>rd</sup> Year)

Disadvantages

One lecturer in Architecture: Is a disadvantage to student when you request them to print everything-too expensive

Shouldn't have to pay loads just to pass my course

Affects work quality as concentrate on print rather than the work

I'd love to print lecture notes... but I can't!

It's not fair- law school pay for students' printing!

Don't know how to use credit/printer?

Difficult sometimes to get to printing facilities

A lot of students think that the library controls printers, credit and general printing up keep and costs

Added stress is just that little bit extra

It is not fair when it's part of your cost

Can't get more money without proving you are already in debt

Printing costs result in better grades if you print hard copies

International students are confused

Print for assignments should be free when better quality is a better grade

Positive/Constructive comments

Reasonable – but don't use it much

Necessary but could be fairer on both sides

It's to be expected-I'm not surprised by the need or costs as it is probably the same for everyone

Necessary

"Expect a reasonable amount of printing credit, by course and if you go over then to pay by yourself"- First Year Creative Advertising

More help and information at the start of the year

Pretty reasonable

Separate card for assignments

Assessment allowance

Work 3 days a week

Need to be taught, so that you don't waste money

It's alright

Not used

Subsidised

Fine- but given a lot of credit

Price is reasonable, but we shouldn't have to pay

Fix the debit card print machine

Everything should be digital

Not bad, but could be better – double sided should be same price

Standard- but posters/plot is expensive

A lot more credit since we are students

Doesn't bother if we are only using credit

Need to be taught how to use printers (2 agreed)

Printing credit released over 2 semesters – so £10 for 'A' another £10 for 'B'

Tablets need to be allowed

Rather university pay for home printers

If printing credit is not used- can we get that money as cash as we didn't spend it?

2<sup>nd</sup> year printing is good

Pretty Happy with printing costs

Printers in accommodation (2 people agreed)

Not really aware of it

Turnit in should be used more

Easy to use

Save trees- hug trees- we love trees!

There should be more printers

More printers anywhere except in the library

Photography: Free prints for end of module images for all first, second and third years

Journalism is quite good:

- Some rooms print for free
- Extra credit is provided from the school