Welcome to our Autumn term newsletter

School excels in student experience

The School of Economics has scored highly in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) in 2013, performing above the UK university sector in many categories including:

- Quality of teaching and learning
- Assessment and feedback
- Organisation and management
- Skills and personal development.

Overall, the School has achieved an 85% student satisfaction rate.

In the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the School has also done well, with a 92% overall student satisfaction rate.

Professor Sophia Davidova, Director of Graduate Studies, said: ‘The School is delighted by this excellent result and I am pleased that we have been recognised for continuing to improve on the quality of teaching and support given to students.’

Scholarships

For the next academic year, the School is offering scholarships worth between £3,000 and £5,000 for outstanding students starting an MSc programme in 2014, awarded on a competitive basis.

CEAS scholarship

The Centre for European Agri-Environmental Studies (CEAS) is offering a one-year scholarship of £3,000 open to students who accept an offer to study for the MSc in Agri-Environmental Economics and Policy. Again, this scholarship is awarded on a competitive basis.

Alumni scholarships

A number of scholarships of £1,000 each are also available to our current Economics undergraduates who will embark on an MSc in 2014. To be eligible students must achieve a final overall mark of 65% or above. These scholarships are in addition to the loyalty discount scheme offered by Kent’s Graduate School.

Facilities

This year we have created a new study space for our MSc students, equipped with the latest touch-screen computers, printers, network points, plus whiteboards and open space for discussion and group work.

MSc pathways

The School offers various pathways to MSc study for both economists and non-economists on a full-time and part-time basis.

We have five MSc programmes that require either a good first degree in Economics or an Economics joint honours degree, including:

- Economics
- Economics and Econometrics
- Economics and Finance
- Finance and Econometrics
- International Finance and Economic Development

For the Applied Economics and International Development MSc you need a good first degree in a sciences or social sciences subject, together with evidence of quantitative ability, for example a pre-university school qualification.

The School also offers a two-year Economics MSc Conversion programme (full-time only), open to anyone who has a good first degree and can provide evidence of a strong quantitative background.

Further information

MSc programmes:
www.kent.ac.uk/economics/prospective/postgraduate/

PhD programmes:
www.kent.ac.uk/economics/prospective/research/

Inside this issue:

RESEARCH FOCUS 2
RESEARCH FOCUS 3
RESEARCH FOCUS 4
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT 5
STUDENT NEWS 6
STAFF NEWS 7
Workplace leaders need to set good example to inspire others

New research shows that workplace leadership is only effective in inspiring high effort in a team if leaders persistently set a good example.

Although the University-led research found that workplace leadership did generally have a positive effect, this was limited and depended on the actions of the leaders, rather than of followers.

Principal researcher, Edward Cartwright, a senior lecturer at the School of Economics, and researchers from the VU University Amsterdam and Osnabrück University, studied workplace team behaviour with a particular focus on leadership by example.

The research found that in some groups, leaders who contributed a lot were able to succeed in inspiring high effort in followers, whereas in other groups where leaders made less effort to set a good example, work efficiency was no better than could be expected with no leader present.

Edward said: 'One of the surprising outcomes was the fact that leadership in itself did not increase average effort within a team. If leaders chose high effort, then this significantly increased the average effort of others. However, we found that leaders often did not set a good example. Indeed, many leaders set a bad example by choosing low effort. ’

'We found that the reluctance of leaders to set a good example was based on the fact that it did not necessarily benefit them. From the leaders’ perspective, choosing low effort was the safe option.'

Their research also highlighted the value of incentives for team leaders to set a good example in the workplace. The findings suggest that incentives and rewards, such as bonuses, should be based on individual performance, rather than that of the team.

Edward said: 'If a team leader works hard and someone in the team lets them down, then they've lost on two counts. Faced with this possibility, they may take the easy option and not work hard in the first place. That's why it's important to reward leaders on the basis of their own performance.'

The study made use of what is known as a ‘weak-link game’. In this, 108 participants, split into small groups, chose a group leader, either randomly or selectively, and then undertook various exercises designed to measure efficiency of leadership in a work setting.

The research team also included Professor Mark van Vugt, of the VU University Amsterdam and a visiting professor at the University of Kent, and Joris Gillet, of Osnabrück University. The study can be viewed in *Economic Inquiry* at: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ecin.12003/abstract](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ecin.12003/abstract).

Animal and plant health in the UK

Rob Fraser, Professor of Agricultural Economics, has been invited to join a new Steering Group for Animal and Plant Health in the UK. Mark Walport, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser is working with Ian Boyd, Defra Chief Scientific Adviser, on an assessment of what the UK’s needs and evidence capabilities will be to underpin best practice for animal and plant disease management during the next 10-15 years, and is keen that the project is guided by the Steering Group.

The Steering Group includes senior stakeholders from across Whitehall, the Devolved Administrations, BBSRC and ESRC.

This will be a six month project, and the group will report in the summer of 2014.
United Nations International Year of Family Farming

Sophia Davidova, Professor of European Agricultural Policy, has been invited by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to give the keynote address on ‘Family Farming: European and Central Asian Perspectives’ at the FAO regional meeting on Europe and Central Asia.

The General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2014 as the ‘International Year of Family Farming’ (IYFF) and invited the FAO to facilitate its implementation in cooperation with governments, the United Nations and relevant non-governmental organisations.

The FAO is organising five regional consultations (Asia and the Pacific, Africa, North Africa and the Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Central Asia) in preparation for a global dialogue next year.

Sophia’s address, given earlier this month, focused on global issues such as national and regional food security, poverty mitigation, and environmental sustainability. Sophia is invited to draft the policy outcome of the consultation, which together with the outcome documents from the other regional meetings will provide the basis of the family farming issues that will be addressed in the IYFF Global Dialogue to be held in Rome in 2014.

Transport infrastructure and economic recovery in Europe

Roger Vickerman, Professor of European Economics, was invited to participate in a day of presentations and debate on the contribution that transport infrastructure can make to economic recovery in Europe. The day formed part of the annual European Transport Conference held in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in October.

As well as an introductory presentation on transport policy issues in the UK, Professor Vickerman was one of three panellists, with experts from Germany and Italy, in a concluding debate on the day’s proceedings. In his presentation, Professor Vickerman stressed that although investment in new infrastructure could play an important role as a stimulus to the economy, the main problem in the UK was the lack of clarity in government policy towards the transport sector as a whole and the lack of joined-up thinking, as displayed in the continuing and often ill-informed arguments over HS2 and airports policy. The main impact of this is on private sector investment which could benefit from better connectivity.

The debate concluded that too often investment in new infrastructure was done without regard to the whole life-cycle costs, including future maintenance, and the opportunity cost of public expenditure. Too often projects are ‘vanity projects’ for elected politicians, which are prioritised for the wrong reasons. There was also a lack of consistency in determining how different types of infrastructure should be funded, including the debate over the balance of user pays versus public subsidy. Perhaps the strongest outcome of the debate was the degree to which similar problems are found across Europe, and the failure to achieve consistency in their treatment.

For further details on staff and their research interests, please see our website at: www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff
Economic life in 17th-century Bohemia

Alexander Klein, a lecturer in Economics, gave a talk on ‘Economic Life in 17th-Century Bohemia’ at a one-day conference at the Embassy of the Czech Republic in London in October.

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Munich Agreement, the day was entitled ‘Not Such a Faraway Country?’ and explored how much both young and established UK-based scholars from a wide range of institutions are currently discovering about the Czechs in areas as diverse as architecture, religious objects, documentary film, economic, cultural and political history, linguistics, literature and philosophy.

Earlier this year, Alex was awarded a three-year grant for his research on ‘Economic Development and the Spirit of Capitalism in Central Europe’, which applies modern economic theory and econometric approaches to Czech data to improve our understanding of links between religion and economics.

Shocking stuff: technology, hours, and factor substitution

A long-standing debate between New Keynesian (NK) and Real Business Cycle (RBC) theorists is whether technology improvements expand or contract employment in the short run. The former claim that technology improvements reduce employment in the short run as prices cannot adjust quickly and hence there is no demand for the extra output. RBC economists, on the contrary, argue that a technology improvement is always expansionary. Professor Miguel León-Ledesma, together with his co-authors, shows that technology shocks can increase or decrease hours worked regardless of price rigidities. In many ways, this result brings the NK vs RBC debate to a closure. The key is in how substitutable labour and capital are: when you allow the degree of complementarity between factors to be different from one, the standard but empirically incorrect assumption, both NK and RBC models can generate expansionary or contractionary effects of technology improvements on employment.

‘Shocking Stuff: Technology, Hours and Factor Substitution’ (with C Cantore, P McAdam and A Willman) is forthcoming in the Journal of the European Economic Association.

Miguel has also recently published papers in the Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control, Macroeconomic Dynamics, and the Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics. For further information, see Miguel’s staff page: www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff/profiles/miguel-leon-ledesma.html

Thirlwall Visiting Research Fellowships

This term the School welcomed Professor Jean-Marie Baland from the University of Namur as a Visiting Research Fellow. During his stay, Professor Baland gave an interesting seminar on ‘The Economic Consequences of Mutual Help in Extended Families’. He is a renowned researcher in the field of development microeconomics with important contributions on the economics of common pool resources, intra-household allocation in developing countries, the political economy of agriculture, and micro-finance. He is a founding member of the THRED network (Theoretical Research in Development Economics), a member of EUDN (European Union Development Network) and a fellow and board member of The Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development.
Charlie Bannister, a current final-year Economics student, completed his Year in Industry in August, working for the Government Economic Service (GES). He came to see me last week to talk about his experience...

**What was your job at the GES?**
I worked in the Treasury, as an economist in the mortgage and funding team. I got to do some quite high-level work.

In my experience, if you work hard they will keep giving you more interesting and varied things to do, testing your ability to manage the type of work.

After the Treasury I worked in the Press Office, the Chancellor’s Office, on the G7 and G8 summits and at Number 10. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but it also grounded me and made me realise that the people I worked with are just the same as everyone else, with families and commitments. Everyone treated me like one of the team.

It’s also possible to work for the Foreign Office, which would be great if you would like to travel.

**Other than the obvious benefit of having something great to put on your CV, what do you feel you got out of your year in industry?**
The most useful thing was making contacts – people on the inside – and building new relationships. I’ve made new friends in the field and can learn from their experiences.

I also gained valuable time management skills; I’m definitely more productive and work in a more efficient way since coming back to university. I think it has made me able to apply myself more to my studies and be less stressed. It also helped with my confidence; I’m more able to speak up during lectures. It gave me knowledge of the real work and put my studies into perspective.

**Has your experience changed your plans for the future?**
Not really. I always wanted to work as a government economist rather than in banking, but it has opened my eyes to some other roles that I hadn’t considered like public relations (due to my work in the Press Office), and working as a political analyst.

Some other students I worked with didn’t enjoy the job, but at least it made them realise that they needed to change direction before completing their degrees.

I’ve gone for more finance-related modules and have changed my degree to Financial Economics.

**How was the salary?**
You get paid very reasonably at the GES, not quite as well as the graduates, but still quite well. I lived at home and commuted into London, which enabled me to save some money to help pay for my tuition fees and living expenses.

It’s also helped with my final-year option choices – I’ve gone for more finance-related modules and have changed my degree to Financial Economics.

**So what’s next for you after graduation?**
I was encouraged to apply for a job at the GES once my placement had finished, and I’ve just heard that I’ve been accepted. Next I have go to through a department selection pool to find out exactly where I’ll be working. I should start in August, provided I get at least a 2:1 in my degree!

Best of luck, Charlie, in your studies and for your future career...

If you are a current Economics student and are interested in applying for a placement at the GES or elsewhere, please contact:
Dr Sylvain Barde at S.Barde@kent.ac.uk.
New PhDs

Several of our PhD students have completed their viva voce since the Spring newsletter. So where are they now?

Iftikhar Ahmad
Iftikhar is working as a staff economist at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

Timo Bettendorf
Timo has recently been offered a position at the Deutsche Bundesbank, starting next year.

Eddie Gerba
Eddie is a visiting fellow in European Political Economy at the LSE European Institute, working with Dr Waltraud Schelkle.

Reinhold Heinlein
Reinhold has undertaken a lectureship at Keele University.

Uzma Iram
Uzma is working as a research economist at the Applied Economics Research Centre at the University of Karachi.

Nazia Mansoor
Nazia is returning to the School in March to work as a Research Assistant with Dr Zaki Wahhaj.

New jobs

Jack Meaning and James Warren, current PhD students, have both secured jobs as research officers at NIESR (the National Institute of Economic and Social Research).

Best paper award

Dr Javier Valbuena received the María Jesús San Segundo Best Paper Award for Young Researchers for his paper titled ‘A Longitudinal Perspective on Higher Education Participation in the UK’ presented at the XXII Meeting of the Economics of Education Association in July. Javier has since graduated with a PhD in Economics and now has a lectureship at the University of Girona.

Snooker success

Dan Devlin, a second-year Economics undergraduate, represented England at the BUCS National Snooker Championships in Dublin in April. England’s 1st team won the team event, and Dan won the Home International Masters individual event, competing against the best university snooker players in England, Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Prizewinners

Undergraduate Dissertation Prize for the best overall performance in the dissertation:
Drew Barnden
Stephen Fuja

Nick May Economics Prize for the best Economics degree result:
Drew Barnden

Outstanding Performance Prize in Economics in the undergraduate final year and MSc:
Jonas Baltakis
Cecilie Wendt
Antonio Luis Gomes
Matheus Lima de Castro
Luke Buchanan Hodgman (MSc)

Thirlwall Prize in Development Economics for the best performance in the Development Economics module:
Omoze Constance Ojo
Cecilie Wendt

Walter Hagenbuch Economics Prize for the best Stage 2 performance by an undergraduate and the best postgraduate degree performance:
Fatima Saba (Stage 2)
Rundeep Kaur Bahia (Stage 2)
Jonathan Chambers (Stage 2)
Christopher Warner (Stage 2)
Denise Lovett (MSc)

Congratulations to all our students on their achievements and we wish them the very best of luck for the future.
STOP PRESS!

The School of Economics is pleased to announce that Dr Alastair Bailey is to be appointed the new Head of School, following Professor Alan Carruth who will stand down later this year. Congratulations to Alastair. More on this in the next issue...

New staff

Welcome to three new members of staff who have joined us since the last newsletter.

Dr Wei Jiang

Dr Wei Jiang joined the School in July as a Lecturer in Economics. She obtained her MSc in Economics from the Scottish Graduate Programme in Economics, University of Edinburgh in 2008 and PhD in Economics from the University of Glasgow in 2013. She also worked as an Associate Lecturer in Economics at the University of the West of Scotland in the final year of her PhD.

Wei has broad research interests in macroeconomics and relevant fields including DSGE modelling, business cycles, dynamic and applied macroeconomics, and fiscal and monetary policy.

Dr Stefano Grassi

Dr Stefano Grassi joined the School in March as a Lecturer in Economics.

He obtained his Master’s degree in Finance from Istao, Ancona, followed by a PhD from the University of Rome ‘Tor Vergata’, Italy in May 2010. During his PhD programme, he was a visiting scholar at VU University of Amsterdam. He was a post-doc student at the University of Perugia in 2010, followed by the Department of Economics and Management at Createes, Aarhus University.

Stefano’s research interests include time series econometrics, state space models, Bayesian analysis and computational econometrics.

Siobhán Buckingham

Siobhán Buckingham joined us in August to cover Katie Marshall’s maternity leave as Postgraduate Coordinator, based in the Economics Student Office. Previously Siobhan completed both a BA and an MA at Kent, before working as a gallery manager in Canterbury.

Funding

Continuing our recent funding success, Dr Yu Zhu, Reader in Labour Economics, has secured a BA/Leverhulme small grant for £10,000 for a project on ‘Sheepskin Effects in the Returns to Education: Evidence from UK Natives and Immigrants’. Yu is working with Dr Hongliang Zhang of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the first recipient of the Thirlwall Visiting Research Fellowship in March 2013.

New baby!

We would like to extend our very best wishes to Katie Marshall and her husband on the birth of Gus on 4 September 2013.

Children in Need

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our cake sale in November, we raised £117.33 for Children in Need!

See our website for more news stories:
www.kent.ac.uk/economics/
For further information on our staff and their research interests, see: www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff