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Newsletter

University of
Kent

Bringing you the latest news from Enrolment Management Services at the University of Kent

2017



Photo: Bell English

Enrolment Management Services

News

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the Enrolment Management Services (EMS) newsletter. Although we have numerous communication channels, which include formal University committees as well as various touch points with University staff who work directly and indirectly with EMS, we are aware that there are many more staff we are finding hard to reach and we hope this newsletter will address this gap.

Our students are our lifeblood and the reason the institution exists. While we are committed to the advancement of knowledge through research, we are also committed to the transmission of that knowledge through teaching.

Students are at the heart of our teaching and supervision, and the tuition fees generated from this core activity are the mainstay of the University's finances. Whether a core element of their role or not, all staff by virtue of their employment pass on to everyone they meet a concept of Kent and affect, in some way, how the University is perceived. This, however small, has a bearing on the recruitment of students; as such we all promote the University to some extent.

Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM)

In order to address the wide range of issues and topics that arise from the University Plan 2020, and impact on the recruitment and enrolment of Kent's targeted student body, a strategic enrolment management plan has been considered by Recruitment Board.



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This plan, drawn up with input from a range of academic and professional service departments is due to be considered by Senate, and is structured around the key themes of Curriculum Design, Strategic Planning and Student Number Delivery. Although formal approval is as yet outstanding, many of the key drivers of the plan underpin existing activity and are in delivery; these include the long-awaited portfolio review, a more market-informed approach to planning and a more coordinated approach to student recruitment.

EMS and the University

EMS came into existence in 2011 as the higher tuition fees for the 2012 admissions cycle came into effect. In this time we have brought together a range of offices and services (Recruitment and Admissions, Partnership Development, Publishing, and Scholarships and Foreign Loans) to better address the ever-changing environment in which the University operates. EMS supports the University community in fulfilment of the University's mission 'to provide opportunity in higher education to the most able students'.



- 1 The EMS VC Cup team at School Sports Day
- 2 Our Clearing Operators doing a sterling job, as always!

Since its establishment, EMS has developed systems and strategies to respond to a range of externally driven initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, the introduction of £9,000 tuition fees, the removal of the student number cap, the changes in student financial support, the imposition of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations and the increased responsibilities on institutions, the categorisation of students as consumers and the resultant legislation from the Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA), as well as the impact of the referendum. EMS has played a role in responding to these challenges while continuing to recruit and admit students in compliance with UCAS regulations, and addressing the demands of the Office for Fair Access.

The year ahead

The 2018 recruitment round is about to commence, and our Recruitment Officers have already started travelling around the UK and Europe, attending the UCAS higher education fairs and delivering talks and presentations in schools and colleges. It's a very hectic time – you can read about a week in the life of a Recruitment Officer to see how much they can cram into seven days! Our Outreach team in the Partnership Development Office has begun another busy year of events, as well as recruiting new staff and developing events for the exciting National Collaborative Outreach Project (NCOP).

The launch of the 2018 undergraduate prospectus kicks off what will be another full year for the Publishing Office. In addition to producing the prospectuses and subject leaflets, they are working with the Digital Communications team and Information Services on the KentWeb project and updating content for the Programmes Plant, as well as working on a number of ad hoc projects. The most recent of these is a self-guided audio tour of the Canterbury campus, a joint project delivered with colleagues in Web Development (see p7).

So, we are looking forward to the year ahead and the challenges that 2017 will bring. Despite all the hard work, we do find time to have some fun, and we're looking forward to participating in the Vice Chancellor's Cup competition this year – hopefully improving on last year's fifth place! We intend to publish this newsletter quarterly and aim to keep you informed of new and planned developments. I hope you will find it of interest.

Mary Hughes

Director, Enrolment Management Services

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KentWeb project

Many of you will have seen the beta page for the new designs for the University's website (if you haven't looked, do so now, it's a real taster of what's to come!). This is a major piece of work, which staff in EMS and Information Services have worked long and hard to develop.

Following extensive research and market testing, both internally and externally, we believe we have a theme and approach that can deliver the best user experience. And, while funding to deliver the project in a 'big bang' approach has not been forthcoming, the teams have worked together to make some immediate gains, which will hopefully impact positively on Kent's primary web-users: our potential students.

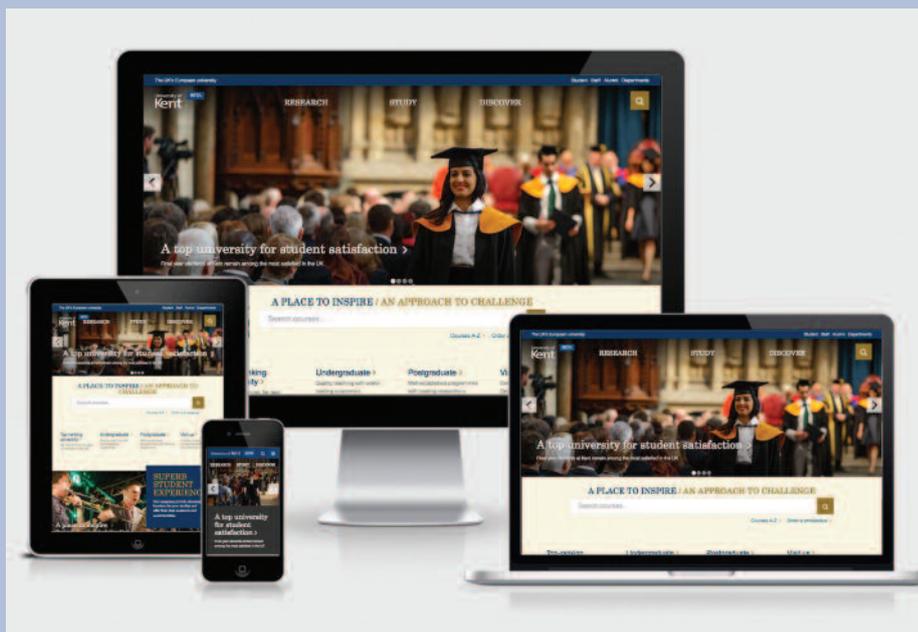
This project has required a root and branch review of the look and feel of our website and the content we publish. Jonathan Thirlwall (IS) undertook the design work, and the resulting structure and content builds on competitor analysis, analytics and user testing undertaken by Angela Watson and the EMS Digital Communications team.

Programmes Plant

The Digital Communications Team are also working hard to transform the Programmes Plant pages into the new design, which will see banner imagery, photos, video and student profiles, as well as newly cast text and expanded careers information added. With over 780 programmes to address, this is an immense task which has required all eyes to screens and hands to keyboards!

Work is also underway to redesign and re-content the University home page and the headline pages of the main headings *Research*, *Study*, *Explore* (the 'top 13') in the new format. We intend to launch these pages by the end of February in line with the new undergraduate prospectus delivery for the start of the 2018 recruitment round in March. The launch will also include new events pages, search results, news pages and error pages (404, 500).

Much of this content has been completely rebuilt, or written from scratch following analysis of both business needs and user needs. The aim is to convey something of what Kent is about in a way that is engaging to a range of people using the website, and with a much more content-centred approach.



We've put a lot of time into thinking about what tone to adopt for certain pieces of content, and how each page can successfully meet overt user needs (by analysing stats to see what people are trying to get done) while also addressing latent user needs and marketing expectations from the business.

Research.kent

A major development has been the creation of standard websites for research projects, researchers or research groups which can now be provided in less than a day using the new Research.kent service. Web Solutions, working closely with Research Services, is able to create a new website for each successful funded research project using text from the grant applications.

Web Solutions will set up the new site with an appropriate URL and banner image, lift text from the grant application to populate the standard sections of the website and pass the new site to Research Services for quality checks before launch.

Examples of such new websites are:

- <https://research.kent.ac.uk/researchincybersec>
- <https://research.kent.ac.uk/physicalactortraining>
- <https://research.kent.ac.uk/metacogandmindreading>

It is estimated that over 100 successful research grants each year will get a website through this service. These projects will then be publicised via the Research pages that will be launched in February as part of the KentWeb project. If this isn't impressive enough, this service is free to Schools!

School pages

The next phase will be to work with academic schools to move their pages to the new design – three pilot schools have been chosen: a multi-subject school and a single-subject school, both at Canterbury, and a Medway-based school.

There will be teething problems as we work to deliver a new approach which focuses on the principles of SSD (single source of data) within a mixed structure (new design pages reliant on text from old design pages), but we are confident that with the support of our community we can realise incremental improvements which will better present the University to the wider world.

To learn more about the KentWeb project, email ems-web@kent.ac.uk

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Admissions

The Undergraduate admissions cycle has got off to a relatively slow start with applications down nationally around 3% on last year as at the 15 January main application deadline. UCAS is now predicting a tough admissions cycle, due in part to the continuing national decline in the 18-year-old cohort and the increased availability of apprenticeships and alternatives to university.

The decline in the number of A-level candidates and the introduction of the new A-level curriculum are likely to exert downward pressure on August exam results, and this will add to increased competition for the best applicants. The impact of the Brexit vote is being felt nationally with a 7% drop in European applications.

At Kent, European applications are down around 16%, with Italy and Spain showing larger decreases in application numbers, which may reflect more on local economic dynamics than a direct reaction to Brexit! Conversion remains the key to our success and EMS will continue to support schools over the coming months to maximise numbers choosing Kent.

Undergraduate applications

Application figures indicate that Kent will be mirroring the national trend, albeit with some variability across key subject groups. Humanities subjects continue to experience downward pressure, particularly in English and History where competition from the Russell Group remains fierce. The University is trialling an 'unconditional offer' scheme in these schools, in response to competitive offer levels elsewhere, to see if this will aid conversion. See www.kent.ac.uk/applicants/information/policies/unconditional-offer-scheme-2017.html for further details.

Postgraduate applications

Initial indications for postgraduate applications show a similar pattern to last year, with taught programmes holding up, but research applications down.

As the main volume of applications is not received until much later in the cycle, there is every chance of further improvement; however it is important to focus on conversion activity given the current global political and economic uncertainties (Brexit and Trump!) which may impact on recruitment in key international markets going forward.



1

Staff

The Admissions Office remains under considerable resource pressure as it seeks to fill vacant posts and recruit recently approved additional admissions and visa-processing staff for the current cycle.

It is hoped to have new staff resource in place by March in time to train and gear up for visa processing. Further detailed analysis of current admissions applications and conversions is now available via the Qlikview portal <https://reg-bi.kent.ac.uk/qlikview/>

Recruitment

The Recruitment and Marketing team engage with thousands of prospective undergraduate and postgraduate students through a range of activities and events designed to raise aspirations, promote the benefits of higher education and promote our course portfolio, our facilities and student experience.

2018 recruitment begins

The 2018 undergraduate prospectus launches at the end of February, just in time for the start of the UCAS higher education fairs, which start in March and run until July. These events attract prospective students who are just at the start of their university journey and enable us to meet our potential applicants face to face and answer their questions about Kent and university life.

In addition to the UCAS fairs, the Recruitment Officers attend parents evenings, careers events and most other higher education activities, delivering talks on the broader aspects of university study, the University of Kent itself, or a general view of higher education today.

They also represent Kent at a number of postgraduate recruitment fairs across the UK and promote undergraduate and postgraduate study across mainland Europe through attendance at Education Fairs and visits to international schools.



2

Applicant Days

These events are for current applicants who have been made an offer of a place at Kent, or have been invited for an interview.

They take place at the Canterbury and Medway campuses between November and April and enable applicants and their families to spend time with their academic schools to find out more about their chosen subject, talk to current students, view accommodation and take tours of the campuses. In 2015-16, we welcomed over 3,450 applicants and their families to the University and 50% of applicants who attended went on to select Kent as their firm-choice university.

Marketing

The Marketing team supports recruitment activities by promoting the University, both online and offline, and raising the profile of all Kent's campuses and programmes.

They continually analyse market intelligence data in order to inform marketing activity, and run several campaigns across the year. The biggest campaigns focus on attracting prospective students to the University Open Days, but they also ran a very successful Clearing campaign last year, working in partnership with Net Natives, a digital marketing agency.

Working closely with marketing colleagues in academic schools, the team put together marketing packages, negotiate competitive rates with external agencies and advise on effective platforms for schools' marketing activities.

They also conduct small and large market research projects; this academic year they have already conducted some market research for Arts and currently have projects for Computing and Anthropology in progress.

For more information about the work of the Recruitment and Marketing team, contact schoolsliason@kent.ac.uk

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- 1 The Recruitment team
- 2 Kent's stand at a UCAS fair in Derby
- 3 The LEGO League final taking place in Eliot College

Recruitment round-up

- 324 events attended off-campus
- 57 events in June – our busiest month for events with school talks, fairs and the end of the UCAS exhibition season. March was the second busiest month with 43 events, and February second with 40
- 35 UCAS exhibitions attended
- 11 Open Days at our campuses and centres
- 23 school visits to our Canterbury campus for tours, talks and interactive sessions
- 15 external postgraduate events attended across the UK
- 20 European countries visited
- 6 European countries visited for the first time: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Switzerland and Austria
- 8,533 calls answered by our team of 38 call centre staff over the first eight days of A-level Clearing.

Read our blog!

Keep up to date with our recruitment activities by reading our Student Recruitment blog: <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/student-recruitment/>

Recruitment and Marketing Forum

The Recruitment and Marketing Forum is an opportunity for Kent staff involved in the recruitment of students to get together to share best practice and discuss new developments within the University and across the sector. The forum convenes twice a term at Canterbury and once a term at Medway.

Next forum dates:

Canterbury campus, Darwin Conference Suite 1

- Monday 20 April, 10.00 – 12.00
- Friday 16 June, 11.00 – 1.00

Medway campus, Rochester Boardroom

- Wednesday 1 March, 10.00 – 12.00
- Friday 5 May, 10.00 – 12.00

For more information, please email Susana Lawrence at marketingoffice@kent.ac.uk

Outreach

The Partnership Development Office (PDO) manages the delivery of a comprehensive outreach curriculum to a network of 40+ schools and colleges in Kent and Medway. The University is also the main sponsor of Brompton Academy in Medway and co-sponsor of Longfield Academy in Kent.

Kent wins funding bid

The Partnership Development Office has successfully led a £4.1m bid to the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE), securing the University as the lead partner in one of the 29 consortia selected to participate in the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). This programme helps support the most disadvantaged young people in England to progress into higher education.

Stepping Up

Offered to partner schools of the University, Stepping Up consists of three modules designed to help students make an informed choice about whether university is right for them, to support them when applying and to prepare them for the transition to higher education. In the autumn term, 17 modules were delivered to 11 schools and a further 20 are planned for the spring term.

Access Information days

Two events were run in October 2016 designed for students studying on access programmes at the University's Partner Colleges and Brompton Academy. The days introduce mature students to the University and enable them to find out more about studying here in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Over 100 students attended the two days.

Student Ambassador Scheme

PDO runs the central Student Ambassador scheme employing Kent students. During October 2016, 98 new ambassadors were recruited to the scheme, bringing the total number of ambassadors employed to 167. In addition, a further 24 stipend ambassadors were recruited from students who previously attended a partner or Kent and Medway Progression Federation (KMPF) school or college. The PDO training team has had a busy start to the academic year, ensuring that all student ambassadors have received appropriate training for the role.

FIRST® LEGO® League regional finals

Taking place in December 2016, this event, run in partnership with the School of Computing, introduces participants to Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics (STEMM) activities through a friendly competition, which involves designing, building and programming a LEGO Mindstorm robot to complete a series of challenges. 19 different schools attended the event across two days.



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Scholarships and funding

The Scholarships and Foreign Loans Unit processes and administers University centrally funded and external scholarships, as well as authorising and processing loans for students from the United States.

Undergraduate scholarships

For the 2016-17 academic year, almost 700 new undergraduate scholarships, which included 614 Scholarships for Academic Excellence, 58 Partner School Scholarships, and 24 Student Ambassador Stipends, were processed. This, coupled with the ongoing administration of scholarships for students in stages 2 and 3, brings the total number of awards to 1,661 and equates to scholarship payments in excess of £3,052,000.

Postgraduate scholarships

We also administer postgraduate awards, which include Research Council funds, the Vice Chancellor's studentships, the prestigious Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctoral programme (EMJD) and the Graduate Teaching Assistantship scheme which, in the 2016-17 academic year, will support over 450 students totalling £3.6m. There are a range of additional awards, among them the Alumni Scholarship, the Christine and Ian Bolt Scholarship and the Fulbright Commission award, which support a further 50 postgraduates.

KentVision

The team is now using KentVision to advertise and promote scholarships. KentVision provides an integrated service which allows the targeting of specific awards to eligible applicants, for applicants to make scholarship applications via the applicant portal, and for us to process and administer the scholarship selection process.

Phase 1 is complete and operational and the next phase should enable us to make scholarship payments via the system, thereby utilising a single student record to inform and deliver this key service.

We are hopeful that all awards can be supported in this manner by the 2018/19 academic year. This will facilitate a more coordinated delivery of our services and allow better tracking of the many millions of pounds sterling we provide in support of our student body.



United States loans

The US government provides loans to support US citizens to study at recognised institutions in recognised locations. The University is recognised to receive such funding in Canterbury, Medway, Brussels and Paris and is working to secure recognition in Paris and Athens. This is a critical funding stream for US students and, like UK Research Council funding, implies a level of academic credibility to an institution. Without such recognition we would be unlikely to attract any US students to Kent. In 2016-17 we processed loans of almost \$3.5 million to support 107 American students.

The US student loan scheme and the considerable debt carried by current and former students was a major issue in the recent US election. With the change in government and the appointment of the new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, we will watch carefully to see if there will be any shifts in policy that may affect US student borrowing and the institutions where they may use their loans.

Research Council funding

The Unit administers student granted funding through the UK Research Councils: Arts and Humanities (AHRC), Economic and Social (ESRC), Eastern Academic Research Consortium (EARC) and Natural Environment (NERC) and part-funded by the University. For 2016-2017, we are due to disburse funding for over 150 Research Council funded students, providing maintenance and support in excess of £1.1 million.

***Please inform us of all awards so we can ensure all potential students and applicants can easily access funding information.
Email scholarships@kent.ac.uk***

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Publishing

The Publishing Office is made up of the Publications Team and the Digital Communications Unit. The Office, as a whole, publishes recruitment-based information for the University both in print and online.

Publications

We produce around 175 publications a year – prospectuses, subject brochures, international publications for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes – and we are responsible for the central recruitment pages of the website, including the Programmes Plant, and work on improving the University's online presence.

We have just completed the 2018 undergraduate prospectus, and will now be working on the undergraduate subject brochures needed for the summer Open Days, as well as other regular publications that are required each year. There are always several ad hoc publications that come up during the year, from brochure updates to newsletters and flyers to leaflets for new programmes.



Video training

The Publishing team and the Marketing Officers recently undertook some video training with a view to creating more video content for course pages.

We enjoyed the two-day training course and learnt a lot about video filming and interviewing techniques. We'll be using these skills on a long-term project to produce student video content for each course page listed on the website; a big undertaking but we're looking forward to the challenge.

This content will take the form of short (two-minute max) student video interviews where current students talk about what they love about their course, the support available and their general reflections on Kent as a university.

Aimed at prospective students, we're hoping to give prospects a real insight into life at Kent, using first-hand student voices. We also anticipate the wide use of these videos on social media, blogs and other digital platforms.

Staff update

After being short-staffed for a while due to the departure of two Senior Editors, the Office now has a full complement of staff and we recently welcomed Becky Evans and Alison Grace to the team.

If you need to contact the Publishing Office about a recruitment-based publication, please email publications@kent.ac.uk. For web/digital queries, please email the Digital Communications team at emsweb@kent.ac.uk

Self-guided audio tour

One of the University's 50th Anniversary Beacon Projects, the self-guided audio tour offers a more interactive way of discovering Kent. The tour was developed jointly between EMS and Web Development, with contributions from academic and professional services staff, and current students.

Concept

Devised as a practical tool designed to make our campuses more accessible and engaging to visitors, guests, prospective students and staff, the audio tour provides visitors with a simple, easy-to-use tool that is compatible with iOS, Android and Windows devices. While primarily used as an aid to navigating a campus/site, it can also be used for a variety of purposes to promote and showcase the University: its academic standing, current research, and curricular and extra-curricular activities and achievements, to include those of our students, staff, alumni and other valued stakeholders.

Phase 1: Canterbury campus

The first phase of the project involved building the software, creating content, conducting many interviews, and lots of editing! The tour features key buildings and facilities with audio, video, text and imagery.

If a user is doing the tour on-campus, they have the option of following a guided route. GPS software pinpoints their location on an interactive map, and a marker tracks their position as they move around campus. For users doing the tour remotely, they simply click on a point of interest on the map to access the content.

The Canterbury campus was the pilot for this first phase, and it is intended to add the Medway campus in Phase 2.

To try the tour, simply enter <https://tours.kent.ac.uk/> into your browser. For more information, please contact Clare Saunders at c.saunders@kent.ac.uk



A week in the life...



I'm David Newell and I've been at Kent for three years now. I studied at the University for four years and completed my Masters in 2011. I worked at The Gulb for a little over two years, before taking up the Recruitment Officer post in EMS.

Thursday 2 February

Day 1 of Studia in Vilnius, Lithuania

This is a three-day event at Litexpo, a huge exhibition centre akin to Excel in London. Kent was one of about 20 UK institutions in attendance including Essex, UEA, Southampton Solent and Newcastle.

Our stand was a single desk and a chalk board on which they had drawn the University logo and written some of our key selling points (!) I spoke to around 20 students in the course of the day, most for about 10-15 minutes. There were some very strong candidates and I also spoke for quite a long while to an applicant who came to ask about her application and the University.

Friday 3 February

Day 2 of Studia

Lots of schools attended on day two, and so we spoke to around 60 students. While schools bring coach-loads of kids, they tend to walk around the fair in big groups and so are less inclined to spend time asking questions, and more inclined to grab prospectuses and head to the coffee shops with their friends.

We also spoke to more postgraduate enquirers, which is a very different proposition as they often have more of an idea to whom they wish to speak, and will make a beeline for your stand. They come with much more detailed questions about funding, accommodation, teaching and facilities than the undergraduates, whose main focus tends to be what courses we offer and if they have the grades to get in.

On Friday evening the event organiser arranged a dinner reception at Verres en Vers, the restaurant at the Atrorija Hotel, which was delicious, and it was great to chat to the other university representatives.

Saturday 4 February

Day 3 of Studia

This was the quietest day, but lots of students came with their parents, which meant a lot of searching questions. Particularly of interest to parents was the impact of Brexit on UK universities, which inevitably is a concern. Once the fair was over, a group of us found a small pub showing the Six Nations and we enjoyed a few Lithuanian beers with the rugby.

Sunday 5 February

Travel day

Direct Sunday flights between Vilnius and London are few and far between so I flew home via Helsinki.

Monday 6 February

Office day

We have a range of tasks to perform when we are in the office, mostly resulting from, or preparing for, other trips and visits. I had to submit my receipts, write my event reports, book a train, hire a car and have a good look through the new 2018 prospectus – it is so much easier to know the answers without having to open it!

I took the afternoon as TOIL from travelling on Sunday to catch up with iPlayer and sleep, but ended up in Mothercare with my heavily pregnant wife!

Tuesday 7 February

Higher Education event, London

Back on the road (well, rails actually), this time to Westminster Kingsway College for their higher education day. I have been there a few times before and it is only a short walk from St Pancras. It is always a good event, and I spoke to lots of students, including several who have already applied and are awaiting responses. While it was a busy fair, it wasn't a long event and I was home by 6.30pm, which was nice.

Wednesday 8 February

Higher Education event, Oxfordshire

Today I went to Headington School for Girls. This is an unusual evening event, with talks and a fair at the same time. We always receive applications, so it's obviously beneficial. Back in 2014 this was one of the first ever schools I visited, so I do enjoy going back. They also do a very good supper before the fair; this year it was Hunter's Chicken, which really hit the spot. Unfortunately, and perhaps inevitably, I hit traffic on the M25 on the way home, so it was a late night.

Thursday 9 February

Office day

And that brings me up to today, a visit to the midwife this morning and an afternoon in the office preparing for future events. The team are preparing for an imminent move from the ground floor to the first floor of the Registry so I am preparing for that, and writing this!

You can keep up to date with our recruitment activities by reading the Student Recruitment blog: <https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/student-recruitment/>