A newsletter created by postgraduates for postgraduates
Welcome to the winter edition of the GradPost. Firstly, we would like to introduce ourselves: our names are Maria, Frances and Gan and we are the GradPost editors for this academic year! We hope everyone is having a good first term and those of you who are new to the University are settling in to the Kent way of life.

In this issue we shall be focusing on the Arts and Humanities. Firstly, Colin Moore will be discussing his experiences of attending a conference entitled Life Beyond the PhD. Then our co-editor, Frances Reading will talk about making her application for a PhD. A selection of our other articles will be discussing local resources around Canterbury, such as the Beaney (Prajay Ghaghda) and Canterbury Cathedral archives (Hannah Huxley). Tory Gillespie will be going further afield and exploring the British Library while our co-editor, Maria Sveidahl, will be introducing a feature on our very own art gallery, Studio 3, which we highly recommend you go and investigate.

On a more light-hearted note, Christmas is fast approaching so there will be a guide to Canterbury at Christmas (Chioma Amadi) including activities that are occurring on and off campus. We discover what it takes to become a stand-up comedian (Tory Gillespie) and study the art of Karate with Dan Stocker-Williams. At the beginning of next term, many English Literature Masters’ students will be going to Pairs for their term abroad so we have included a guide to lesser known areas of Paris by Mary Girerd and a short piece by Jenny Swindall on why she is leaning more towards a career in science that interacts with the public. I would like to thank the University of Kent Graduate School for funding this conference. The Lodge, a 17th century house, is only a few miles from Windsor Castle and to be able to spend three days here and explore its surroundings made it worthwhile attending just for that. My passion for science communication was enhanced and I am leaning more towards a career in science that interacts with the public.

Frances Reading, MA in English and American Studies
Jian Wei Gan Lim, MA in the Contemporary
Maria Sveidahl, MA in Curating

Life Beyond the PhD

A Conference at Cumberland Lodge

Life Beyond the PhD was a three-day conference, hosted by Cumberland Lodge in the heart of the Great Park in Windsor, Berkshire. The event aimed to bring PhD students from a variety of disciplines together to exchange ideas and aspirations for the future while also providing opportunities to guide students in making future career decisions.

I am a PhD student at the Medway School of Pharmacy. My work overlaps physical and life sciences, mostly dealing with problems associated with human diseases. Despite thoroughly enjoying the day-to-day life in the laboratory, I firmly believe that scientific research needs to be communicated in an accessible manner that informs and intrigues the public. This conference provided me with the opportunity to speak to a non-scientific audience and to reinforce my passion for ‘informing and intriguing.’ Even now I feel obliged to describe my work:

‘My research, under the supervision of Dr Vladimir Gubala, is centred on the use of nanomaterials for targeted drug delivery to cancer cells. In a nutshell, I am developing tiny sand-like spheres (thousands of times smaller than the width of a human hair) as a means of delivering cancer drugs specifically to cancer cells. Science has veered from cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy, that do not specifically recognise tumours, to methods that can effectively discriminate between healthy and cancerous tissue. This leads to more efficient treatments and improved patient quality of life.’

‘I am also working on developing sensors for detecting diseases. Earlier in 2013, I visited the lab of esteemed researcher Professor Kevin Plaxco at the University of California, Santa Barbara and learned how to fabricate inexpensive diagnostic devices that utilise properties of DNA to detect biomarkers associated with early cancer formation.’

Day one at the conference saw recent PhD graduates reflect on their trials in completing their doctoral studies and the directions their careers have taken. Though the majority of the speakers were from outside my field, there were useful nuggets of advice to take from their talks. Everyone stressed the importance of continuously ‘writing up’, which could turn seemingly vague reports into more fruitful projects at a later stage. Some speakers remarked how they realised from an early stage that research was something they did not want to pursue and that completing their PhD was a daily struggle, a sentiment I think many students can identify with.

The second day was mostly taken up by ten minute presentations from the PhD students in attendance. These presentations were extremely beneficial and exciting, a feeling shared by other attendees. Before attending the conference I had to face the challenge of ‘how can I squeeze everything into ten minutes?’ But, as I have become increasingly aware, the ability to communicate clearly and concisely is an art. I learned to identify information central to my talk and, when pitched correctly, appeal to a wide audience. The presentation preparation and delivery profoundly improved my communication skills and confidence in speaking publicly. Also, aligning with its educational ethos, the Lodge provided feedback cards for the audience members to constructively assess each presentation. I found this particularly useful in highlighting my presentation’s strengths and weaknesses and has since helped me to focus on improving certain areas of my public speaking. It was also fascinating to listen to the array of PhD projects being undertaken across the UK. Topics ranging from the white male underground rap scene in London to the seismic activity on Mars were captivating and a real eye-opener for me.

Day three focused on workshops dealing with public engagement, presentation skills and tailoring CVs and cover letters for specific job applications. I benefited most from the public engagement workshop. I became more aware of the various forms of public engagement and the approaches that often lead to successful public events.

In conclusion, I highly recommend attending the Life Beyond the PhD conference. The Lodge, a 17th century house, is only a few miles from Windsor Castle and to be able to spend three days here and explore its surroundings made it worthwhile attending just for that. My passion for science communication was enhanced and I am leaning more towards a career in science that interacts with the public.

Colin Moore
PhD in Pharmacy

Frances Reading, MA in English and American Studies
Jian Wei Gan Lim, MA in the Contemporary
Maria Sveidahl, MA in Curating
Applying for a PhD

Preparing for a PhD: A Personal Perspective

The winter break is approaching and while during my undergraduate degree that meant four weeks of rest and relaxation, as a Master’s student I do not have that luxury. On the last day of this term I have to hand in my MA dissertation proposal and by the beginning of the spring term I will have written two 6,000 word essays. Moreover, while I and my fellow Master’s students stare glassy-eyed at our computer screens hoping for inspiration to strike, a question floats around our heads: to PhD or not to PhD?

I am one of those students who wants to do a PhD, despite numerous lecturers telling me the likelihood of it leading to a career in academia is somewhat miniscule. It is not because they are unsupportive; the School of English department at the University of Kent is exemplary and the staff go above and beyond the call of duty to offer advice, materials and expert suggestions. They are simply trying to warn me that it is extremely competitive and difficult to get a job at a university. But, then again, that is a general pattern throughout the job market, so I am not going to give up because then I certainly will not succeed! Besides, I am a self-confessed nerd; I love learning and annoying my friends and family with my endless prattle about Russian history and literature. Also, ‘Doctor Frances Reading’ has quite a nice ring to it...

Of course doing a PhD does not necessarily mean you want a job in academia. This is simply what I want to do. Furthermore, despite trying to make my CV look wunderbar in preparation for the hunt, looking for a job is a long way off. In order to do a PhD I need to get funding so I also have to conjure up a credible, interesting, substantial (i.e. show there is three years’ worth of work to be done) and original research proposal that impresses the School of English, the Faculty of Humanities and the Consortium for Humanities and the Arts in Southeast England. No biggie... Happy Christmas to me!

Frances Reading
MA in English and American Literature

How to Apply – The Facts

Guidance on how to apply for a postgraduate research degree is available at: www.kent.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/apply/

The University allocates over £6.5 million from its own funds and attracts an additional £2 million to provide a variety of financial support opportunities for postgraduate students. Further information about sources of postgraduate funding for the 2014/15 academic year is available at: www.kent.ac.uk/courses/funding/postgraduate/sources/index.html.

Should you wish to pursue a postgraduate research degree, we would encourage you to make contact with the Director of Graduate Studies (with responsibility for research programmes) in the school where you wish to pursue your research. If you already know the member of staff you wish to supervise your project, you should make contact with him or her directly.

Suzie Morris
Graduate School

Stand Up for Stand-Up

When the Stand-up Comedy course was launched at Kent in 1999, the press was somewhat dismissive. Philosophers and psychologists have dabbled in humour analysis for years, from Plato to Freud, all with strong and wildly different opinions about how and why we laugh. Until recent years, there has been little academic interest in researching and teaching Stand-up Comedy as a theatrical form. It is not exactly an ancient art; the term Stand-up was only coined as a term in the middle of the 20th Century, and before Dr Oliver Double launched the Stand-up Comedy course at Kent, there was a general consensus that Stand-up was not a discipline that could be taught.

Comedy has been taught in other forms (clowning and mime) for a long time, and with much reverence. So why not stand-up? Here at Kent we have students of comedy at every stage, undergraduate, taught master’s and PhD. At research level, there is a fairly even split between practice-based and purely academic students. However, the crucial unifying factor is the Drama Department within the School of Arts. Focus is very much on the theatrical creation, writing and performance skills – not the science of what is and is not funny. Students are encouraged to experiment in a ‘safe’ environment in the same way that an actor would rehearse to explore and improve their technique, in order to prepare for performance in a less forgiving environment.

A handful of universities in the UK offer some form of academic inspection of comedy, either from a Social Sciences perspective (Brunel University), or as a vocational performer-training programme (The University of Salford). The University of Kent remains unique in its approach, and although I’m proud of that fact – I remain baffled. Stand-up comedy is more popular than it has ever been before in Britain, with the most popular comedians achieving something close to rock star status. As the industry develops it requires analysis and discussion. Some of the topics Kent has been discussing in recent years include ‘Who’s in Charge? Negotiation, Manipulation and Comic Licence’ and ‘Containing the Audience: the “Room” in Stand-up Comedy’. There is no doubt plenty of scope for academic research and practice in Stand-up, and until the rest of the UK realises this, Dr Double and his pondering jokers are laughing their way through a fascinating new genre.

Tory Gillespie
PhD in Practice as Research in Drama and Theatre Studies
The refurbishment of the Templeman Library is well under way and with the Drill Hall and Tonbridge Centre libraries nearby, the University of Kent’s postgraduates have plenty of resources. But what if you cannot find that all-important journal or obscure manuscript here in Kent? It is possible to request material from other libraries, but a quicker, easier and more inspiring solution might be to take a trip to London and visit the British Library.

The Library is free to all, but you will have to register for a Reader’s Pass to gain access to the Reading Rooms. Furthermore, plan your visit as most requests will have to be placed 48 hours before they are needed, so it is well worth pre-registering for your pass online. You will need two forms of identification, as well as a bibliography. The staff are very clear: the British Library should not be treated as a classy alternative to hauling your laptop to Starbucks. It houses a popular collection containing over 150 million items and is used by 16,000 people every day.

Having said that, they do welcome research students and are running a series of subject-specific doctoral open days from December to February. If you need a break from studying, take a stroll around the Sir John Ritblat Gallery. Where else can you see a Shakespearean folio, Chinese botanical paintings and Beethoven’s tuning fork all in one place? With the high-speed train service to St Pancras station – a mere two minute walk from the front gates of one of the biggest libraries in Europe – it is well worth making the trip. Of course, if the British Library is not the place for you, remember that as a postgraduate student at Kent you can gain access to academic libraries all over the United Kingdom and Ireland through the Society of College, National and University Libraries. See www.sconul.ac.uk for more information.

Tory Gillespie
PhD Practice as Research in Drama and Theatre Studies
Have You Been to the Beaney?

Not too many people know about The Beaney, despite the combination of art gallery, museum and library being located on Canterbury High Street.

After reopening in 2012, The Beaney has enjoyed a variety of different exhibitions and events. On the ground floor there is the first exhibition space ‘The Front Room’ that rotates between artist residencies, workshops and events. Opposite is ‘The Garden Room’, a fixed exhibition space supported by the Canterbury Auction Galleries, which features paintings and drawings by the famous Canterbury-born Victorian artist Thomas Sidney Cooper. Included is his last oil, painted at the age of 99! It’s an awe-inspiring exhibition with several pieces impressing through their sheer scale; a must see for any visitor.

Also located downstairs is one part of The Beaney’s library – a great resource for students and bookworms alike. There are two forms of membership and both are available free of charge. ‘Instant Membership’ allows you to take out up to three books and free access to the internet via the library computers. ‘Full Membership’ requires a photo identification and proof of address but allows up to 30 books to be taken out at a time. Particularly of note to students, this also allows you to order in books from libraries all around Kent, which is an invaluable resource for those undertaking very specific projects. The Library is split into two sections with the downstairs floor featuring fiction while the upstairs has a wide range of textbooks available and other items of non-fiction.

The Beaney features several beautiful exhibitions upstairs. The permanent ‘Explorers & Collectors’ exhibition is particularly interesting, featuring finds from excavations in Ancient Egypt, Greece and objects discovered in Asia, Africa and South America. All items were donated by soldiers, missionaries and diplomats. It is a great exhibition for those wanting to see a varied collection of pieces of world history. There are many other exhibition rooms all packed into the relatively small space including ‘The Drawing Room’, which showcases changing displays of prints, drawings and watercolours from the museum’s collections. There is also a large ‘Special Exhibitions Room’ which features both national and international loans and museum collections, spanning historical to contemporary art.

The Beaney is a great place for anyone even remotely interested in art, history and culture. Furthermore it is also a fantastic resource for students and one that should be used by all.

Prajay Gaghda
MA in Comparative Literature

The Cathedral Library: A Literary Haven in the Heart of Canterbury

As many of us know, during the course of the academic year postgraduates can clock up a record-breaking number of library hours. Yet, while the Templeman Library does hold an extensive collection of printed and online materials, it may not house that 14th-century manuscript you have been desperately searching for. Fortunately, as a Kent postgraduate, you have access to a fantastic range of resources off-campus.

Canterbury Cathedral Library and Archives boasts an impressive collection of early printed books, manuscripts and theological works, dating as far back as the late 8th-century. Currently the largest collection is to be found within the Howley-Harrison library. Originating from the private collection of Benjamin Harrison, it includes a wealth of material, for example: bibles, medical works, travel literature, political papers and anti-slavery pamphlets. For those English literature or history enthusiasts, who may be looking for rare manuscripts to include in their research, the collection also displays some fantastic examples of early English printing, such as the 16th- and 17th-century illuminated Books of Hours.

The library itself is certainly something to behold; a beautiful space, housing rare works of literature, complemented by the tranquil calm of the ‘Reading Room’, located within the Cathedral Archives. Having undergone a recent renovation, the ‘Reading Room’ was re-opened in February earlier this year, and is accessible to all of those who hold a Reader’s Ticket (details of which can be found on the Cathedral Library website). There is also a seminar room in which research workshops and seminars frequently take place.

In addition to paying a visit to the Cathedral Library, you can view images of several of these resources online via the ‘Picture This’ research portal; an innovative and collaborative project with the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) here at the University of Kent.

Appointments to view any of the material housed within the Library collections must be booked in advance by emailing: library@canterbury-cathedral.org. Further information on resources available within the Cathedral Library is available online at: www.canterbury-cathedral.org. Discover something new for your research!

Hannah Huskley
MA in English and American Literature
Christmas in Kent

A Canterbury Carol

Hark! Yuletide is upon us and some of us are going to be celebrating the holidays in Canterbury. The reasons may range from not having family in the country, to wanting to stay on campus to study and use the facilities. All the same, Canterbury is usually on the quiet side during the holidays. With most students going home, the campus may sometimes look like a scene from The Night Before Christmas, not a creature stirring (not even a mouse). However, there are ways to keep yourself seasonally entertained in and around Canterbury.

For those of you who like picturesque street markets, the Christmas market at Whitefriars Square is running up until the December 15. Canterbury holds this event every year and there are stalls upon stalls of different goods, from winter scarves and festive gifts to edibles of the chocolatey and gingerbread kind. Take a short walk through the medieval-esque streets of Canterbury and hum along to the carols playing as you browse what is on offer. Also, mulled wine! Hear, hear! Need I say more?

Campus services like the main Essentials and some of the bars are open most days except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year’s Day, and sometimes, New Year’s Eve. The library will normally publish a schedule of its opening times before the end of term.

Canterbury Cathedral will have a Service of Carols December 23 and 24 at 7.30pm and 3.00pm respectively. Go and listen to a wonderful choir sing in a place that offers so much beauty and historical perspective. Attendance on the 23rd is free of charge and seating is on a first-come first-served basis. The event on the 24th, however, is ticketed. To apply for tickets please send a stamped addressed envelope to Cathedral House, Carol Service, The Precincts, Canterbury CT1 2EH.

The Children’s Society will also be hosting a ‘Christingle’ service on the December 28 from 3.00pm where the congregation will receive Christingles; oranges tied round in red ribbon, with sweets on sticks pushed into them, and a candle in the middle.

Cinema-goers will be pleased to know that the Gulbenkian Theatre and the Canterbury Odeon cinema will be open this holiday period, showing an array of films. Something is bound to tickle your fancy! Canterbury also has a variety of clubs where you can dance the night away and there is the option of having a quiet drink in one of our fine pubs if clubbing is not your scene.

If all else fails, jump aboard the Polar Express (I mean, any train from the Canterbury stations) to London. It is not too expensive (cheaper if you have a railcard)! You can spend the day shopping in London or visiting the spectacular Winter Wonderland at Hyde Park which runs every day except for Christmas Day right up until January 5. It features attractions such as a circus, various fairground rides, and a magical ice kingdom crafted from real ice and snow. If, unlike me, you can brave ice-skating without spending more time behind-on-the-floor than actually skating, there are ice rinks not only in Hyde Park but at the Natural History Museum, the Tower of London, and at Hampton Court Palace. You can do all this and still be back home in time to watch Love Actually while swaddled in your duvet with a steaming mug of eggnog.

So get into the Christmas spirit of things! If you have a friend or two that you know is also spending their winter break in Canterbury, get in touch and arrange to do something. If you do not know anyone, now is the time to start spreading that Christmas cheer and get socialising with other students in your accommodation, at lectures, random strangers in Essentials? Just kidding on that last one, but not really. Happy Holidays!

Chioma Maureen Amadi
MSc in Developmental Psychology

The Grad Post
Curating on Campus

Studio 3 Gallery

The gallery provides the first intake of MA in Curating students with the opportunity to gain valuable first-hand experience in delivering museum-quality art shows along with impressive projects for their CVs and knowledge of how to manage and run a professional gallery. Since its opening, the gallery has become a critically acclaimed art institution in Kent, receiving research funding from highly regarded art organisations such as the Henry Moore Foundation and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art's Curatorial Research Grant, with connections to Yale University.

This term, the sculpture exhibition featured at the gallery has displayed important works, not only by Royal Academician Alfred Drury (1856-1944), but also by Aimé-Jules Dalou (1838-1902) and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Sections in the gallery space invite the audience to trace the development of Drury's work and New Sculpture in British art, along with the influence of Dalou. Largely an overlooked figure in British art, Alfred Drury, with his extensive career as a public sculptor, is finally getting the recognition he deserves. Furthermore, the Alfred Drury sculpture exhibition has attracted local as well as national art critics, cementing the status of Studio 3 Gallery as a vital research tool in south east England. Through the research carried out in connection with the Alfred Drury exhibition, Dr Ben Thomas and the interning students have managed to uncover previously forgotten material on the sculptor, which has been published in the exhibition catalogue. John Davis, studying for an MA in Curating, expands, ‘It is amazing being part of a curatorial team that is responsible for new research into British art. We have had such astounding feedback and I am confident that the exhibitions on at Studio 3 this year will put the MA in Curating on the map despite it being a new degree here at Kent.’ However, the Studio 3 Gallery is not only for the enjoyment of art critics and School of Art students, but also serves as a cultural centre for all students, staff and the public in and around Canterbury.

In general the gallery has entered a thrilling new phase as a research tool for postgraduates and as a practical element of the MA programme. With tasks such as applying for museum status, cataloguing, promoting the gallery and planning future exhibitions, the curating postgraduate students have had a busy start to their course. Davis elaborates on his reasons for choosing Studio 3 Gallery and the School of Arts as the focal point of his studies; ‘I decided to apply to the MA in Curating because of the exciting opportunity it offers a young graduate student. We are offered valuable hands on teaching as well as all-important practical experience in a very competitive and difficult economic climate for early career graduates in the arts. I would go as far as to say that starting out as a curator is almost impossible without partly practical courses offered at institutions such as the University of Kent and Studio 3.’ He goes on to comment on the Drury exhibition: ‘This term the gallery has probably put on its most ambitious exhibition to date and, as such, I am relishing being involved in this new phase of Studio 3.’ John and the rest of the curating students are hoping, through Studio 3 Gallery, to get a step ahead of other early-career curators by building a network of contacts and contributing to a gallery on the rise.

The winter term will see a new, exciting chapter in the gallery’s history, showcasing the work of printmaker Marcus Rees Roberts, in collaboration with Pratt Contemporary Art. This exhibition will explore the space of the gallery shifting the focus from three-dimensional artworks to the flat surface, thus providing new obstacles for the curator and the MA students, and introducing Rees Roberts’ expressive artworks to the public of Canterbury.

The Studio 3 Gallery is located in the Jarman Building, open on weekdays 9.00am-5.00pm.

Maria Sveidahl
MA in Curating
With around ten different martial arts-based clubs, we are almost spoilt for choice! So, why choose Karate? Well, the style taught here is one of the oldest (and probably the best) forms – Shorin-Ryu. Okinawan in origin, this traditional style arose on an island that was a melting pot of Chinese and Japanese cultures (‘Shorin’ – being the Okinawan pronunciation of ‘Shaolin’ – hints at these beginnings). This mix gave rise to a martial art that was an eclectic fusion of earlier forms. Consequently, this style covers a broad syllabus that extends beyond the usual karate staples, such as punches, kicks, blocks and various other strikes. It also includes grapples, throws and other techniques, broadening into the realms of Judo and Aikido. Even kobudo (weapons-training) is practised, using bo (a wooden staff). With a strong focus on actual applications, Karate at Kent teaches real-life, practical self-defence.

Sensei Mark Caddy and the other senior grades, provide a safe and friendly environment for training, in which they explicate and encourage, in equal measure. And so, with dedication and a joie de vivre attitude to the inevitable yet somewhat satisfying soreness that succeeds training, you will soon begin to reap the fruits of your labours. Just a few of the many health benefits include: improved strength, flexibility, balance and physique. After all, mens sana in corpore sano.

Try something new: Karate

Do you want to be bad-ass, like Jason Statham? Or, are you just looking for a New Year’s resolution that will help you shift the inevitable Christmas pudge and have fun in the process? Either way, look no further, the University of Kent Karate club is for you!

With four-hour sessions running each week on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, the amount of time you dedicate to training is incredibly flexible. And, with membership costing the modest sum of just £20 for the whole year, it is an excellent investment. So, even if you have just watched too many Jackie Chan films do come along and give it a try. For more information check out either the Facebook page ‘Shinbukan Karate – University of Kent – Forum’ or email: uckkarate@hotmail.co.uk

Dan Stocker-Williams
MA in English and American Literature

Global Skills Award Programme

Run by the Graduate School for taught Masters’ students, the Global Skills Award Programme (GSA) features a series of lectures and workshops designed to enhance global awareness, and improve employability in a competitive job market.

This six-month programme is free of charge, and allows students to participate in discussions on global issues, such as economics and world politics. This year’s programme will include workshops on networking, effective team working, interview skills and CV writing.

Postgraduate student Lara Horton (MA Creative Writing), shared her thoughts on signing up for the GSA – ‘It’s great to be able to take advantage of the programme, and I think I will learn some valuable information in each of the workshops and lectures that I can then apply to my future goals. The lecture on ‘The Wisdom of Psychopaths’, by Dr Kevin Dutton looks especially interesting!’ Here at the GradPost, we’re looking forward to watching the progress of this year’s GSA students.

Hannah Huxley
MA in English and American Literature

The Editorial Team

Editors
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MA in English and American Literature
Jianwei-Jeanson Ganlim
MA in The Contemporary
Maria Svendsdahl
MA in Curating

Sub Editors
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MA in English and American Literature
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PhD in Biochemistry

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MSc in Developmental Psychology

Revise Editors
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MA Postcolonial Studies

Features Editor
Dan Stocker-Williams
MA in English and American Literature

Production Editor
Albert Kampe
MSc in Computer Science

Journalist
Tory Gillespie
PhD Practice as Research in Drama and Theatre Studies

Contributors
Jenny Swindell
MA in English and American Literature (Paris Option)
Mary Girerd
MA in 18th Century Literature

Twitter and Facebook
Hannah Huxley
Prajay Gaghda

Graduate School
Katie Watson
Graduate School Assistant
Ros Beeching
Graduate School Co-ordinator

Production
Design and Layout
Design & Print Centre