Hello all!
Welcome to your winter edition of the GradPost. We hope you have had a great start to the new academic year and, to those who are new to Kent, we hope that you have settled in well. This is the first edition produced by our entirely new editorial team. We have made a few changes this time around and hope to bring you interesting and informative articles to accompany you through this academic year.

The chosen theme for this edition is community, with two articles focused on student societies here at Kent. We hope to give you a better idea of what is going on, and if you haven’t already, motivate you to bite the bullet and get involved!

On page 3 our Kent Union president, Tammy Naidoo, provides an introduction to Kent Union’s new democratic structure, ‘ChangeIt!’ the new petition model that makes it easier for your student voice to be heard.

On top of that, our writers give you a few useful tips and tricks for postgraduate life. In her column ‘Positive Psychology insights’ Vanessa Dias unpacks the notion of happiness, discussing what it really is and how you can achieve it.

Whatever you do this year, make sure to get involved! Canterbury offers plenty of opportunities for you to make the most of your time at Kent, such as concerts, art exhibitions and more. On our final page Valerie van Leeuwen has put together a ‘What’s on...’ list for you, highlighting worthwhile events held both on and off campus.

We hope you have had an enjoyable and productive term and wish you a relaxing winter break. If you have any questions or would like to get involved, do not hesitate to get in touch, either by emailing the GradPost team or by visiting our Facebook group.

The Editors

Mylène Branco
PhD Comparative Literature

Lucy Farndale
MA International Social Policy

Positive Psychology insights

Is happiness a dreamy goal or can it be real?

Etymologically, ‘happiness’ derives from happy + ness, meaning a ‘pleasant and contented mental state’. Therefore, it appears happiness is concerned with your inner self; a state which requires effort, care and a mindful attitude.

There are several myths and personal misconceptions regarding happiness. Having a nice big house, an expensive car or winning the lottery are sometimes considered the best things that could happen to a person. However, social researchers have shown us that ‘yes, money is important’ – but continuous increments in your income do not directly mirror long lasting happiness. This means that, after a certain amount of money, your happiness stops being fuelled by material and tangible goods.

So, is happiness a dream? No, but we haven’t been investing our time in the most important ‘ingredients’ necessary to make ourselves happy. Rather than simply coming from material things, researchers have claimed that happiness relies on being engaged with yourself and others, nurturing relationships with family and friends, having a purpose in life and achieving goals that matter to you. In all, it depends on being self-aware and deciding to manage your life in the right way.

Indeed, this notion of happiness seems to be a better fit than the actual meaning of the word. Happiness is not a dreamy fantasy – it can be very real and is available to you, despite your nationality, socioeconomic background, gender, age or any other kind of variable that you can think about. Furthermore, Positive Psychology research has also given us precious insights about what we can do to boost our happiness.

One of these is to think about our life’s meaning. Often we take ourselves and those around us for granted. We get used to the presence of others, our daily routines, schedules, feelings, thoughts and actions. There are moments in which we are not even conscious of why we wake up every day. Days go by and our life script seems pretty faded and senseless. We do not feel enthusiastic about our journey and we are not aware of the fact that we can write our own script, adding positive moments to it or changing patterns that cause us suffering.

But, before you make the changes you need, you must identify and think about what really drives you as a human being. What gives you light? What makes you smile? Who has the ability to enlighten you? When do you feel inspired? Where do you feel good? Take a note pad, a pencil and go to somewhere you like and that makes you feel comfortable. Think about all these questions, one by one, and write every answer on your piece of paper. Take time to personally engage in this activity. It will allow access to greater self-knowledge and a clearer perspective of the path ahead of you. Can you achieve happiness in your present moment? With a bit of positive thinking and action, yes you can.

Vanessa Dias
PhD in Psychology
Kent Music: A community

‘What I like most about Kent Music Society is that it allows me to share my love for classical music with people from all over the world.’

Feeling inspired by the many talented musicians that are part of Kent music, Anne Engels, who plays the flute for the University’s Concert Band, particularly enjoys how music brings young and old together. There is a constant exchange between the musicians, as the more experienced instrumentalists pass down knowledge and alumni play alongside current students. Ultimately, making music at the University of Kent lets people be part of a community whose individuals do not need to live in the same place to feel connected.

What makes Kent’s Music Department so special is its variety, inviting everyone with a love for music to join. With the traditional Symphony Orchestra, Chorus, Concert Band, Big Band, a Cecilian Choir, the String Sinfonia ensemble and the well-known Chamber Choir, the University of Kent offers a diverse programme that students, staff and the local community can get involved in. Throughout the year, Susan Wanless, the Director of University Music and her team bring to their audiences exciting concerts such as the highly anticipated Big Band Christmas Swing-Along, which this year will take place on Wednesday 16 December 2015.

For the spectators and musicians alike, the memories made are irreplaceable, and so the tradition that music connects people can be confirmed, especially since Invicta Voices – a chamber choir based in London – saw the light of day in October 2014. Formed out of University of Kent alumni, this choir is the result of a shared longing for taking music beyond University life. As students graduate and move on to exciting careers, leaving university behind, making music at the University of Kent lets people feel a part of a community whose individuals do not need to live in the same place to feel connected.

This year, for the first time, Kent’s Music Society and the Music Theatre Society reached out to other societies and organised their Inaugural ‘Kent Arts Ball’, hosted by the Physical Activity and Performance Society Forum at Kent Union on Saturday 7 November 2015. Together with the T24 Drama Society, the Salsa and Dance Societies, the Student Music Societies helped to raise money for charity, with 50% of the profits from the event going to People United, who are seeking to generate kindness through the arts. Again, this 50s Hollywood-themed evening, shows how music transcends boundaries, merging different societies for a good cause.

Myléne Branco
PhD in Comparative Literature

Change it!

As Kent Union President, I get asked a lot of hypothetical questions: ‘If I wanted to do this, how would I go about it?’, ‘Have you considered this?’ Or ‘Who would be responsible for that?’

When I would explain about the Zone Committee meetings that took place, or the procedures of Union Council, it became clear to me that a perceptual barrier existed for students taking their first step towards engaging with the Union. We decided that something needed to change. And change it did!

At the end of its second week, our brand new democratic structure, ‘Change It’ has already seen an eclectic mix of submissions from students, many coming from those who had not been involved before. Now when students ask me ‘who is responsible for this?’ or ‘who can make this happen?’ My answer is simple, ‘You!’

Students can simply log onto the Kent Union website, tell us what their idea is and we action it. If the idea is something we can do straight away, ie put more sugar-free drinks in Essentials, then we let the student know and set to work to make it happen. If the idea affects Kent Union policy, or requires a bit more consideration, then it passes to an online petition. When 150 students sign the petition, then the idea is put to an All Student Vote. If the student body agrees, the idea becomes Kent Union Policy! The purpose of ‘Change It’ is to give all students the chance to take ownership of their time at university.

It seems like an obvious point to make, that students should have the strongest voice on campus, but it’s something that’s often forgotten. As president of Kent Union, I believe that it’s our responsibility to ensure that students feel empowered and have a voice. With the addition of ‘Change It’, that voice is louder than ever! If you’re not happy with something the University is doing, or you feel students would benefit from something Kent Union could provide, submit it to ‘Change It’. No idea is too big or too small. Want different food vans at lunch time? Want us to lobby the University on your behalf? ‘Change It’ can help you to make it happen.

The benefits of being a member of our student community is often publicised, but something equally important is the responsibility that every member of that community has to one another, to ensure its continual growth and security. We want every student at Kent to feel a part of this legacy by leaving one of their own. Submitting an idea through ‘Change It’ is the easiest way to do this, providing students with the opportunity to shape Kent Union policy now, and for the future.

Tammy Naidoo
President of Kent Union
Help the Homeless

No matter where you stand on the issue of homelessness, few can deny the troubles faced by rough sleepers over the winter months. The number of homeless individuals in Canterbury is already high, and sadly on the rise. It’s a very visible issue, and one that without the help of local organisations (and the people that help them flourish) would be notably worse.

Care and support for this issue comes from within our own community here at Kent. Over the past two years, The Canterbury Homeless Outreach has piloted new initiatives designed to support the city’s homeless community, raise awareness of their circumstances, and stimulate debate surrounding the issue of homelessness more broadly. In conversation with their Vice-President Katie Norris, the GradPost found out a little more about what they have achieved, how the society is organised, and the best ways for you to get involved.

The society runs two separate groups, their namesake Canterbury Homeless Outreach and a sideline venture, Sandwiches and Soup. Canterbury Homeless Outreach has a primary focus on fundraising for local charities which provide advice and support for those facing homelessness. Last academic year they piloted a number of successful fundraising initiatives, the most notable of which was their Help the Homeless week, comprised of an art exhibition, documentary screenings, debates, Krispy Kreme sales and a sponsored sleep out – all to raise cash in aid of their chosen organisations: Catching Lives, Porchlight, and the Canterbury Housing Advice Service.

The society also injected a healthy dose of myth-busting into the equation, running lunchtime talks which addressed prevalent topics of debate such as ‘Are all homeless people addicts?’, ‘Do people choose to be homeless?’ and ‘Should you ever give money to homeless people?’. Not only did this increase awareness, it also raised a further £3,000 for established charities and their cause.

The society’s sister group Sandwiches and Soup is dedicated to the organisation of daily outreaches across Canterbury city centre. Members have worked hard to establish a partnership with high street bakery chain Greggs (and formerly Pret A Manger) so that they are able to collect and distribute excess food to those sleeping rough each night. Outreaches are well thought through and always led by an experienced leader, with the society providing training sessions so that outreachers feel comfortable and confident in what they are doing.

Importantly, the frequency of these outreaches has allowed the society to get to know homeless individuals on a more familiar basis, in turn learning more about their situation, the challenges they face, and what needs to be done to help them. These individuals are truly passionate about making a difference and their growing knowledge of the problems involved in tackling homelessness in Canterbury makes a conversation with them indispensable to anyone who wants to make a difference but doesn’t know where to start.

Whether you simply want to learn more about the issue or are interested in getting involved directly, the GradPost urges you to go along to one of their weekly meetings and see what it’s all about. These are held every Monday at 19.00 in KLT2, where they discuss what should be done, held talks on a broad range of relevant topics, and often invite guest speakers from local organisations to discuss more topical issues.

Lucy Farndale
Masters’ in International Social Policy

Opportunities for Postgraduate Research Students

Eastern ARC PG Mobility Fund

Keen to attend a conference or training workshop at UEA or Essex? Or perhaps you’d like an opportunity to collaborate with them? The Graduate School invites applications for funding from all postgraduate students to support travel to events or periods of collaborative work with these universities as part of the Eastern Academic Research Consortium (Eastern ARC). The Eastern ARC is a research collaboration uniting the Universities of East Anglia, Essex and Kent. There is no deadline for applications and these can be submitted at any point during the academic year. Please see further details at: www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/easternarc.html

Get involved, be inspired!

Canterbury’s Postgraduate Research Café

Our Research Café initiative is well into its second year now. An opportunity to showcase your research in an informal and supportive setting, the Research café offers opportunities to network with, and learn from, your peers. The café runs every two weeks and currently features one or two presentations from postgraduate researchers per session. But we need you! Do you have any suggestions for spring and summer term café events or presentations? Would you like to propose a topic or theme for discussion? Some ideas for events next term include: a debate, a session on ‘Collecting Research Data: Challenges and Lessons Learnt’, ‘Aha!’ moments: what illuminated my research’.

Get in touch if you would like to contribute, and let us know your thoughts and suggestions by emailing graduateschool@kent.ac.uk.

Postgraduate Experience Awards

The Graduate School would like to thank all those who submitted applications to the Autumn round of the Postgraduate Experience Awards. A panel consisting of the three Faculty Associate Deans (Graduate Studies) and the Master of Woolf College, chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School considered the applications and decided to award funding to the Biohacking in Kent project, submitted by Mun Ching Lee and Keith Grehah, PhD students in the Medway School of Pharmacy. The project aims to ‘hack’ biology and mix it up with music and art, by creating DNA sequences from participants’ saliva and using the sequences to form creative projects. If you are interested in participating, look out for details of the first session (to be advertised soon) which is taking place in the New Year.
How to...

Train your little monkey. I mean... your mind!

Last week, it was my first English mindfulness intervention at The Umbrella Centre, Canterbury, UK – thanks to my office mate, Chloe Tyler, who is doing a great work on mental health stigma.

And at the end of the session, to which very interesting people attended (I even learnt about Great Britain's history, so you can imagine), what people most recalled was the Buddhist’s comparison of the mind to a little monkey. This is how it goes: when you start the journey of disciplining your mind through mindfulness practice, you have what we call in Buddhist Psychology a beginner's mind. This means your mind will behave as a little monkey which jumps from branch to branch just like your mind jumps from thought to thought.

And you don't have to worry about it, because this is what your mind naturally does. You can't simply empty your mind of thoughts and ideas as you empty your rubbish bin. It takes more effort and commitment if you really want to have control over your mind. It takes daily and intensive practice for Buddhists monks, so don't expect an easy formula if you decide to start training and focusing your mind. It's like if you were training a little monkey to be able to sit still right next to you. And, of course, this will only happen if you have the patience, will and time to do it, because the monkey has its own stubborn will in the beginning as your mind does (otherwise you wouldn't feel the need of having more control over it and probably you wouldn't be reading this!).

So how can you train your mind and gain more control over your thinking process? At The Umbrella Centre I tried to make it clear that, if you are new to meditation and/or mindfulness practice, it's important to take a little step instead of aiming to be the next enlightened monk on earth in less than 24 hours. Remember: it takes patience, will and time to train your little monkey and... keep in mind that it will not learn everything you want in just one session. You have to practice it!

But take it easy and start with a five minute session. You can have a mobile app like this to help you. It looks simple but, when you start practicing it, you will notice that it's not so easy as it seems, because your mind will naturally wander – you will be thinking about past or future stuff, instead of just being in the moment. And when that happens, just notice it, let your distracting thoughts go and return gently to your exercise. Try to keep the focus on your breath and whenever your mind go somewhere else... just come back and stay with your breath.

So take care of your little monkey. After some time of practice, you will see how much more control you have about your own thoughts, reactions, emotions and behaviors. You will be able to manage your mind and keep a better track of your thinking process, just like a monkey would be able to sit next to you without the impulse of going after every new stimulus that comes into its sight.

And, yes, believe me, I was also very skeptical about meditation and now I am doing research on mindfulness meditation for the third or fourth consecutive year, so... why don't you give it a try?

In resume:

- start with a five minute daily practice
- sit still and keep yourself focused on your breathing
- let go any thought related with past or future – just be in the present moment
- don’t be too harsh with your little monkey – be patient

Vanessa Dias
PhD in Psychology

The Global Skills Award Programme

Countering the silence of indefinite detention.

The Global Skills Award (GSA) Programme has begun and we have already attended lectures on: 'Not so Silent Nights: Myths and Realities of Christmas 1914', 'The Wisdom of Psychopaths', 'The disappearing Computer', Are our ‘genetic’ males bits shrinking into oblivion?' and ‘Exploring Global Cultures’. In addition to these GSA lectures, we also encourage students to attend a number of selected Vice-Chancellor’s Esteem Lectures (Open Lectures). One of the Esteem Lectures which GSA participants could attend was held on November 10, where David Herd gave a lecture about detention centres in the United Kingdom; where refugees and asylum seekers are being held awaiting removal to their country of origin. As Herd stressed, people are detained here indefinitely, which is forbidden under British law. A person can be detained up to 24 hours without charges, unless serious suspicions, such as terrorism, are present.

In the detention centres, people are held for up to several years awaiting their fate. This raises major questions about the legality of these centres. Those detained are not given a voice, as they are not allowed to be present at their own hearing.

In order to raise awareness for this ongoing problem, the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group organised the Refugee Tales. The first Refugee Tales walk was held in June 2015 and took eight days. The group walked from Dover to Crawley via Canterbury. At each stop, two tales were told: one of a refugee, former detainee or asylum seeker and one of someone who has worked with those mentioned before. Where these people used to be hidden away from society, the walks allowed them to move, be seen and for their stories to be heard.

The Refugee Tales walk is closely connected to the current refugee crisis. If you would like to get involved, you can find more information by visiting refugee tales.org

If you are not part of the Global Skills Award Programme but are interested in attending some of the evening lectures, you are more than welcome to do so: www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/skills/programmes/gsalectures.html

Valerie van Leeuwen
MA in International Security and Politics of Terror
What’s on?

Got spare time or need a break? The Gradpost recommends these events...

**Cardboard Canterbury**  
The Beany House of Art and Knowledge  
See Canterbury through the eyes of those who experience homelessness.

**Meet Santa**  
5-24 Dec 2015  
Whitefriars Shopping Centre  
Because you have always wanted to and have never had the chance.

**Alistair Mackie: Selected Works**  
9 Dec 2015 – 30 Jan 2016  
Sidney Cooper Gallery  
Mackie’s minimalistic art is a great way to clear your mind before the busy holidays.

**50th Anniversary Poetry Anthology Launch**  
15 Dec 2015  
Senior Common Room, Keynes College  
A little bit of poetry never hurt anybody!

**Open Swim Session**  
15-16 Dec 2015  
Kings Recreation  
The event states: “turn up and swim!” Why not?

**Christmas Swing-A-Long**  
16 Dec 2015  
Colyer-Fergusson Building  
The University’s Big Bang will make you swing and sing a long whilst enjoying a glass of free mulled wine and some mince pies.

**Royal Opera House – The Nutcracker (live)**  
20 Dec 2015  
Gulbenkian Cinema  
A unique opportunity to see the famous ballet production live streamed from London.

**Dickens at Christmas**  
22 Dec 2015  
The Marlowe Theatre  
Probably the best way to begin your Christmas celebrations.

**Odysseus Piano Trio**  
17 January 2016  
St Gregory’s Centre For Music  
Start the Spring term with a fresh and clear mind after enjoying this piano concert.

**The Marlowe Comedy Club**  
23 Jan 2016  
The Marlowe Theatre  
For under £10 you can enjoy a night of stand-up comedy.

**Gavin Esler ‘In Conversation’**  
with Mark Kermode  
23 Jan 2016  
Woolf Lecture Theatre  
Kermode is Britain’s leading film critic and the evening allows for a Question and Answer session.

**Philharmonia Orchestra**  
The Marlowe Theatre  
As the website describes it: ‘Inspiring, Exhilarating, Adventurous’.

‘Discipline in the Belgian Army (1914-1918)’, a talk by Senior Captain Tom Simoens  
25 Feb 2016  
Darwin Lecture Theatre 2  
Part of the First World War Seminar Series.

**University Chamber Choir**  
26 Feb 2016  
Canterbury Cathedral Crypt  
Listen to Kent’s own choir in the midst of the beautiful Cathedral.

**The Colyer-Fergusson Concert: University Chorus and Symphony Orchestra**  
5 Mar 2016  
The Nave, Canterbury Cathedral  
The University Chorus will be accompanied by the Symphony Orchestra for some music magic.

**Breakfast At Tiffany’s**  
15-19 Mar 2016  
The Marlowe Theatre  
The iconic story performed as a play including music, starring Pixie Lott.

**University Concert and Big Bands**  
18 Mar 2016  
Colyer-Fergusson Hall  
Kent’s own at its best.

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