A newsletter created by postgraduates for postgraduates

A word from your sabbatical officers

News from the Postgraduate Research Festival

Best foot forward: a postgraduate pilgrimage

Image: Party in the Car Park, Kent Union
Editorial

Hello all!

Welcome to your final (or first) edition of the GradPost for this academic year. I say ‘final or first’ as this edition will not only go out to our current students who are diligently making the most of the quieter summer months on campus, but is also given to all our new postgraduate students arriving in September.

To the newcomers, I would like to warmly welcome you on behalf of the postgraduate community to the University of Kent and I hope that you have an enjoyable time here with us. To those of you who will be leaving Kent soon, donning your billowing robes and attempting to pull off a silly hat at your graduation, I wish you all the very best for the future. Your hard work has paid off and you can now stick some more letters at the end of your name. Distinguished!

This edition is a platform illustrating what the University can do for you, how to make the most of your time here and how to get involved. We start with a ‘hello’ from the President of the Kent Graduate Student Association and also a handy guide by Carmen detailing how to get involved with university life. Evelina’s article follows Carmen’s theme by going into greater depth about postgraduate life at the beautiful Medway campus.

On p6 and p8 we showcase the awesome events run by our students and funded by the Faculties, the Schools or the Graduate School; including three conferences, the Global Skills Award (do you have one?) and Joanna’s inspiring pilgrimage across Italy.

Hello,

I hope current Kent postgraduates are enjoying the summer months when campus is a little quieter. For those whose time at Kent is coming to an end, both I, and the rest of the Kent Graduate Student Association (KGSA), wish you the very best for the future. I would also like to welcome those new students who are coming to Kent for the first time. You have made a great choice in picking Kent as your university and we all hope you will be very happy here.

The KGSA is a body of postgraduate students who represent both taught and research students in the University and Kent Union. We are involved in arranging events and campaigns for postgraduate students and in the last two years have grown significantly, and hope to develop our role even further.

The KGSA committee is made up of a President, Vice-President, and postgraduate taught and postgraduate research representatives from each faculty. There are also several officer positions ranging from sports to welfare. This term we have been working on events for Welcome Week in September, as well as working with the Union to ensure that the library and other facilities remain open over the summer period.

People can get in touch with us by email, kgsa@kent.ac.uk, or via Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentgsa or twitter: @kentGSA

I look forward to welcoming you all in September!

Vid Calovski
KGSA President
PhD in Social Policy

Get involved

Make the most of your time at Kent

Life at university can feel stressful if you focus only on studying. Achieving high marks is important for your future career, but don’t underestimate the benefit of extra-curricular activities. They are an opportunity to learn new skills and more fully enjoy your student experience. So, what does the University of Kent have to offer?

Sports clubs
If you would like to take part in sports and fitness, all you have to do is choose an activity (or activities) out of the 35 different clubs run by the University’s Sports Federation. From societies for American football to ski and snowboarding, there are various activities to get involved with.

For more information visit: www.kent.ac.uk/sports/clubsandsportstudies

Societies
Societies give you the chance to meet new people, enjoy activities and have fun. There is a wide range to pick from across academic, cultural, religious and special interest groups. Also, if you don’t find a society that suits you, you can start your own. For more information visit: Canterbury: www.kentunion.co.uk/activities/societies/

Volunteering
Volunteering is a great way to give your time and skills to help others. It is a rewarding experience and there are many ways you can get involved. For more information visit:

Canterbury: www.kentunion.co.uk/activities/volunteering/

Medway: www.gkunions.co.uk/activities/volunteering/

Student Media Centre
The Student Media Centre is equipped with state-of-the-art radio studios, editing suites and a TV studio, which are available for developing your media skills in an industry-quality environment. You can get involved with Kent Television, the Community and Student Radio or Inquire Media Group. More information is available at: www.kentunion.co.uk/activities/student-media/

As you can see, the University of Kent offers a range of activities that you can get involved in, so don’t miss your chance to fully experience university life and to get involved!

Carmen Piras
PhD in Pharmacy

The Editor
Frances Reading
PhD in English
Representation

What are your elected sabbatical officers doing for you?

Tammy Naidoo
Kent Union President
Hi, my name is Tammy and I am your Union President. My job is to represent the student body as a whole within the University and the community, on both a local and national level. I fight those big issues that affect all students, from cuts in government funding and rising tuition fees, to supporting the rights of our students and making sure they’re getting a fair deal from the University. If you want to get in touch about any campaigns or changes that you want to make, please contact me at: union-president@kent.ac.uk. You can also ‘like’ my Facebook page to keep up to date with my progress throughout the year: www.facebook.com/unionpresidentkent/timeline

Tom Currie
Vice-President (Activities)
Hi, I’m Tom and I am your Vice-President (Activities) 2014-16. My role is to help you love your free time at Kent by helping you get involved in the wide range of activities we provide here within Kent Union. Our activities include societies, volunteering, student media and fundraising. If you’re interested in getting involved in student activities, send me an email and I will be happy to help out: union-activities@kent.ac.uk

Jack Lay
Vice-President (Education)
Hi, I’m Jack and I am your Vice-President (Education) 2014-16. My role is to represent and campaign for you on all issues regarding your educational experience at Kent. Whether this is facilities in the library or the quality of feedback you are receiving, my role is to make sure the University listens to student issues. In addition, I support and lead all parts of the course rep system helping to train, facilitate and lead the reps. My focus this year for postgraduate students is to continue to lobby for better dedicated social and study space. We have had some great successes this year and I want to continue to build on these into the next academic year. I work alongside the postgraduate rep system to support your academic experience at Kent, so if there is ever an issue, please get in touch at union-education@kent.ac.uk so that we can help.

Nina Mehmi
Vice-President (Sport)
Hey, my name is Nina and I am your Vice-President (Sport) 2014-16. It is my job to campaign and represent your voice on all issues surrounding sport, whether that is playing for a sports club, being a member of Kent Sport, or having a sports scholarship. I want to make sure your voice is heard, so that the University recognises how important sport is to our time here at Kent. Some of my priorities this year are making sure the University remains committed to the Academic-Free Wednesday agreement, to ensure that the flexible payment memberships are put in place for Kent Sport memberships, and to make sure we are running non-term time sporting activities. Please do get in touch at union-sport@kent.ac.uk and get involved with helping the University recognise and appreciate just how important sport is to your time here!

Rory Murray
Vice-President (Welfare)
Hello, I’m Rory, your Vice President (Welfare). My role involves representing all Kent students on a whole range of areas including wellbeing, housing, safety and community. Two of my top priorities are working on introducing a £2 meal deal (making lunch that bit cheaper) as well as challenging the stigmas around mental health and developing our support services. One of my main focuses for postgraduate students is to ensure that during the winter, Easter and summer breaks as many services as possible remain open for those staying on campus. I’m here to represent you and to work on issues that you want your officers to take on, so feel free to drop me an email at any time on: union-welfare@kent.ac.uk

ISHA
Sensing the past: a sensory perception of history

The International Students of History Association (ISHA) is held all around the world and now, for the first time since its formation in 1990, the ISHA Kent in Canterbury section will be hosting the next annual conference and elections.

ISHA is designed for any student with an interest in history and the aim of its seminars and conferences is to combine social, cultural and historical knowledge and awareness. The upcoming conference will look at aspects of history as perceived through the physical senses, as well as the alleged sixth sense, that historians have when they search for new material and hypothesise about their results.

Taking place between 28 March and 2 April 2016, the events will take place across both the University of Kent and the Canterbury Christ Church university campuses. Activities will include historical visits, academic workshops, lectures and, of course, the formal election processes for the international board. Students will be given the opportunity to develop networks with local and international students.

The opening and closing lectures will be available to anyone wishing to attend, as well as some of the social events. However, if you have a few hours to spare to help with organisation and hosting, you will be entitled to come along to far more.

For so many of us this is a truly fantastic opportunity, so if you are interested in getting involved, please feel free to visit our page on Facebook, or contact our committee for further details: www.facebook.com/ishaKent/timeline

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Pip Gregory
PhD in History
Opportunities and events

Postgraduate Research Festival 2015

The 5th Annual Postgraduate Research Festival was held in the Grimond Building on Monday 22 June 2015 and attended by postgraduate students from a variety of disciplines across all three faculties.

The day began with a welcome from the Dean of the Graduate School and the opportunity to network and chat while viewing the wide variety academic posters on display. This was followed by a series of postgraduate ‘Three Minute Research’ presentations, where students presented across a range of topics including the winning presentation entitled ‘Flying pigs: from the laboratory to your digestive system’ presented by Giuseppe Silvestri. All of the Three Minute Research presentations (students had three minutes to present their research topic on one slide) were innovative and an exciting opportunity to engage with research areas across a wide spectrum of academic subjects.

After a break for refreshments, those in attendance were able to choose between three equally engaging parallel sessions; Dr Tina Haux, who spoke about job opportunities outside academia, Dr Godfred Boahen, who talked about CV development for academic careers and Professor Mini Song who gave a talk on journal publishing. The parallel talks were followed by an interesting round table discussion on ‘Interdisciplinary Research’ led by Professor Darren Griffin and Professor Davina Cooper.

Finally, attendees were able to enjoy the second round of Faculty poster presentations. The posters were of a very high standard and they were all presented with enthusiasm and passion. The posters were assessed by Professor Ruth Blaieley (Social Sciences), Dr Colin Johnson (Sciences) and Dr Antonio Lázaro-Rebolli (Humanities), all of whom commented on the excellent quality of the posters, making it difficult to choose just one winner from each faculty. After much deliberation, the poster awards for best in each faculty were given to: Josephine Uwimeme from KLS for her poster ‘ICC intermediaries in international criminal justice’, Robbie Wilson from School of Arts, for his poster ‘Towards a Ludic Ecology: PLAYful Participatory Peripatetic Performance’, and Jenny Ashcroft from SMSAS for her poster ‘Baby Skyrmions without a potential term’. In addition to this, it was decided that this year an award would be given to the best interdisciplinary poster, which the judges decided to award to Anita Jeyam from KLS for her poster ‘Modelling the dynamics of animal populations: does the model fit?’ In addition to this, it was decided that this year an award would be given to the best interdisciplinary poster, which the judges decided to award to Anita Jeyam from KLS for her poster ‘Modelling the dynamics of animal populations: does the model fit?’

The Festival concluded with a drinks reception where Professor Diane Houston, Dean of the Graduate School, presented awards to the winners of the best faculty poster, Three Minute Research presentation and best interdisciplinary poster. The winners each received a £50 gift voucher for Blackwells.

It was an excellent day and the Graduate School would like to thank all the speakers, presenters and those who attended for their contribution.

Jo Addison
The Graduate School

The Global Skills Award Programme

Are you a taught Master’s student coming this September? Do you want to increase your employability and broaden your thinking on global issues? If your answer is yes, then why not take part in the Global Skills Award (GSA) programme for 2015/16.

The GSA is structured and coordinated by the Graduate School to enable participants to explore and increase awareness of global issues by facilitating a series of workshops and lectures aimed at improving employability skills. The programme runs for a six-month period between November and April, and all taught Master’s students are eligible to apply. After acceptance, students write a personal ‘skills assessment’, which helps them to reflect on previous experience and future expectations on development.

The lecture series, chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School, allows participants to engage with global issues including world politics, the environment, global economics and developments in science. Lectures are delivered by leading academics, field experts and current affairs professionals. Notable talks have included; ‘Not so silent nights: myths and realities of Christmas 1914’ by Professor Mark Connelly, an interesting talk from Professor Michelle Garrett on progress in cancer research entitled ‘Cancer research and treatment; past, present and future’, and the eye-opening discourse delivered by Dr Kevin Dutton on ‘The wisdom of psychopaths’.

As for the series of skills training workshops, these offer participants the opportunities to learn and acquire a variety of skills. Workshops on networking, communication and leadership skills serve as valuable assets in knowing how to excel in the workplace. Practical skills, such as writing CVs and cover letters, are also covered in the workshop list, designed to help you secure an interview for your dream job.

For full details on the GSA programme, email skills@kent.ac.uk or visit the website below: www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/blogs/programmes/gsacurrent.html

Salaudeen Amao
MSc Networks and Security
I’m not going to lie; attending was a rather last minute decision. A 30-minutes-before-they-stopped-selling-tickets kind of thing, but the lure of the booked artists Fuse ODG and Example (who is actually famous) as well as the realisation that nearly all my friends were dressing to the nines for this staple item in the University calendar, meant I had to go. Plus, I could actually afford the £45 price tag without having to fast for a week to balance the books, so why not?

Being a cool and trendy postgrad, I hung out with my undergraduate friends for some cheeky pre-drinks (water for me, I’ll have you know) and we all looked rather glam in our suits and dresses, if I say so myself. We took the obligatory avalanche of #selfies and then queued up nice and early in the snaking line at the centre of Kent’s festival scene. As I have a look of total innocence, I went through security without even a gentle frisk after which we stomped that red carpet like the VIPs we were (this may be poetic licence at this point). We walked through the first tent, avoiding the tasty yet extortionate food places (for now) and went straight to the spinning cage of death that they had put up in order to avoid the queues and reduce the likelihood of centrifugal vomit. In the queue it was a long game of hide and seek with friends you had not come with, eyeing up the talent and taking random selfies with the #LadsOnTour who seemed to be behind us. Round we went on the spinning cage, and survived – it is always good fun to be spun around vertically in a wheel from a van and live!

From there, my friends decided we must go to the dance tent. Soap were bringing their Venue fun to the night with a walk-through of the past 50 years of cheese and pop, so we were all happy. More bumping into friends, queuing for drinks, grabbing the poor photographer for a ‘look natural but pose’ photo, and finally getting to throw some shapes and get into the fun spirit of the evening.

Dodgems were next. I mean free bumper cars were enough for me! Got to love ignoring the rules, watching rather drunk people try to work out how to make it go forward and/or backwards and just having a laugh with your friends doing something you do not get to do very often – or is that just me?

We lost a bunch of friends, re-found them, lost them again – all part of the fun so long as you have that one friend who never leaves you, otherwise you spend a while just wandering around feeling rather like Nemo. We then camped out in the main tent to see the live acts. It was so hot in there I probably could have left Paul Hollywood’s breads to rise quite happily (Great British Bake Off joke) but I was planning to try out my Azonto moves when Fuse ODG came on, no matter what.

Fuse was alright, but a bit of a let-down since I love his music and he did not seem to sing that much; it was more like moving to a backing-track. But it was still great to see him on a stage with thousands of other people dancing along.

The last act of the night was Example who was epic, such a good showman, and DJ Wire got the crowd up and raring to go – before, during and after. Great lights, some proper Example classics, a few re-mixes and some new stuff. Loved it!

If that is not your cup of tea though, there was plenty of seating out and about, food stalls, and three tents for you to pick and choose from, and of course the fairground rides. All in all, a great recipe for a fun night out, not necessarily the cheapest or best night you’ll ever have, but one that is great fun spent with friends, some well-known acts and a lively atmosphere. Plus, if you’re living in the Woolf Building, you might as well join the #PITCP rather than stay inside tapping your feet to the music or hiding from the bass!

Sebastian Bromelow
Research MA in Comparative Politics
Postgraduate initiatives

Best foot forward

A postgraduate pilgrimage

Towards the end of May, I set off on an unforgettable, University-funded trip: to walk the 370 kilometres from Pietrasanta, Tuscany, to Rome, accompanying postgraduate student Julia Peters on the last leg of her incredible 2000 kilometre cultural pilgrimage.

The Via Francigena is an ancient pilgrim route from Canterbury to Rome, passing through France and Switzerland, which people travelled in medieval times to visit the tombs of St Peter and St Paul. Nowadays, most people walk or cycle it in sections as a holiday, few are brave (or mad) enough to do the whole thing.

I was off on an adventure, independent and worldly; all I needed were the few things in my rucksack and those in my head. I arrived in Pietrasanta, an idyllic little town in northern Tuscany, feeling young and foolish. I had no idea what to expect, how our days would be structured, how my body would react to 27 or even 33 kilometre days, or how I would get by without any Italian.

Walking in the footsteps of so many people was humbling, as was sacrificing ‘fast’ ways of living and travelling, for a slower more natural one. When you are walking for entire days, you become aware of every muscle, every slight twinge, and every burst of energy. After my blisters healed, I felt strong. I could feel myself getting fitter, my rucksack felt lighter and I could keep up with Julia far more easily. Better than that, my head felt clear and rejuvenated, just like my body. We had one simple goal for the whole day: to get from A to B. Gone were the to-do lists of ordinary life, the procrastination and the stress when you have not achieved as much as you should have. We could gauge exactly how well we were doing in kilometres and, best of all, there was nothing to think about except whatever your mind happened to wander to. It was a childlike luxury, to have nothing to do but gaze in awe at the horizon, the mist, the cypress trees and the little line of ants on the path.

Now that I’m home, I feel stronger, braver and more optimistic. I feel like I can take things slower and, in that way, achieve more. I’m filled with a new confidence, a new determination that every day can be a new adventure, wherever you are.

I would recommend the Via Francigena to anyone and everyone, especially the Tuscany part. But whatever you do, do not exfoliate your feet before a walking holiday…

For more on the Via Francigena, check out Julia’s blog at: www.kentontheviafrancigena.com/

Joanna Maskens
MA in Creative Writing (Paris)
Face behind the building

Joanna Lumley

Named after legendary English actress and human rights activist Joanna Lumley, the Lumley Building holds a flexible and adaptable black box performance theatre for the School of Arts, which was opened on 17 March 1990.

Lumley was born in Kashmir and Jammu, India on 1 May 1946. Her father, Major James Rutherford-Lumley was serving in the 6th Gurkha Rifles, a regiment of the British Indian Army at the time. After Indian Independence, Lumley's family returned to England and settled in Kent, where she attended Mickledeene School as a boarder until the time she began at St Mary's Covent School in Sussex. After attending the Lucie Clayton Finishing School in west London, she was chosen to be a model for photographer Brian Duffy and Patrick Lichfield who became a close friend. Once she caught the spotlight, her career as a freelance model took off in the 1960s when she became one of the top ten most-booked models of the decade.

Her acting career bloomed with the film *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* where she played a Bond girl and, soon after, she stepped into the memorable role of her early career as the lively Elaine Perkins in *Coronation Street*. The most famous role in her acting career came when she played Patsy Stone in *Absolutely Fabulous* which has played on and off from 1994 to 2012. Her return as a comic actress led Lumley to international fame, and her role in the show has been considered one of the greatest female comic performances ever, solidifying her place as a well-known and much admired actress in the UK. Her recent work has included dramas like *Up in Town* and *Sensitive Skin*, which have seen Lumley cast as a woman of an older age, reflecting upon life and loss; roles that have once again endeared her to the public.

Besides her acting career, Lumley is an active human rights advocate. Her early childhood links with India inspired Lumley to support the Gurkha Justice Campaign in the UK. In 2008, after being contacted by Folkestone councillor Peter Carroll regarding the hardships that former Gurkha soldiers were having in finding employment, Lumley helped to publicise the campaign while the High Court heard five cases of Gurkha veterans living in the UK. In 2009, a motion was passed in parliament to allow all Gurkhas to be offered the right of residence in the UK if they served before 1997. Lumley continues to be an activist for the Gurkhas living in the UK.

In addition, Lumley’s activism includes support for Survival International, a human rights organisation that supports the rights of indigenous peoples around the globe, along with the Born Free Foundation and the Free Tibet campaign. She is also a patron for a variety of charities including Tree Aid, Trust in Children, Acton on Addiction, and the Friends of Kadzinzini. Lumley’s activism extends to animal rights; she chose to be a vegetarian for 40 years, and supports animal rights charities Compassion in World Farming and Vegetarians’ International Voice for Animals. Indeed, her activism has also led her to support the Green Party in the general elections, as well as the elections for the European Parliament due to their support for human and animal rights. For a brief time, supporters were calling on her to run for parliament herself.

Further to her achievements both in acting and activism, the University of Kent awarded her an honorary Doctor of Letters (Hon D Litt) in July 1994, and in 1995 Lumley was conferred with an OBE, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. By 2013, Lumley had been named as one of the 100 most powerful women in the UK, highlighting the significant influence she holds.

Lumley’s recent film work has been in conjunction with ITV, which includes documentaries following her travels to finding the Northern Lights in Norway, her journey up the Nile River to Rwanda, as well as visiting Greece, Iran and Russia. She also continues with her activist work, recently creating the Disasters Emergency Committee to garner support for the people of Nepal after the earthquake.

Given Joanna Lumley’s fantastic achievements in her acting career and her activism, it’s no wonder that the School of Arts named a drama theatre after her as an inspiration for all future Kent drama students.

For more information about the drama facilities and the School of Arts, please visit: www.kent.ac.uk/arts/

**Stacy Weaver**

MA in International Relations
Get involved

Medway campus

What’s going on?

It is true that many Medway students often take a shuttle bus to the Canterbury campus to attend workshops or research festivals, but what about Medway’s own graduate network?

With more and more postgraduate students joining the University of Kent at the Medway campus over the years, there is an increasing range of new activities and networking opportunities being organised, making postgraduate life at Medway a lot more interesting.

The Medway Postgraduate Society was established a couple of years ago, with the purpose of unifying all postgraduate students based in Medway. By organising events and nights out, it offers a great opportunity to get to know other students, especially if you are new to the University and want to make new friends. The society has a Facebook page where events are advertised and people from across the University can post interesting news items from their departments and the research that is taking place there.

Events and activities are also organised by the GK Unions, a partnership between the University of Greenwich Students’ Union and Kent Union at the Medway campus. Alongside trips and events, GK Unions sponsors a wide range of societies you can join, across a variety of cultural, fitness, social, faith and academic interests. These societies give you the chance to meet people with similar interests and an opportunity to widen your connections. GK Unions also hosts 15 sport clubs including athletics, cricket, football and rugby, as well as providing advice and support services for students regarding financial, housing and health matters.

A great networking opportunity has arisen in the last few months, through a series of Postgraduate Research Cafes that have been organised at the Medway campus by the University of Kent’s Graduate School. During these sessions, held every two weeks, one or two postgraduate students have the opportunity to give a presentation of their research, followed by questions from the audience.

They have been a huge success and an increasing number of people are getting involved in sharing their work, or simply coming along to learn about something outside their specific field while enjoying a cup of coffee and cookies (often homemade by the participants). If you want to know more about these sessions, you can go to the Facebook page where the meetings are advertised, or visit the Graduate School website.

But life is not only university-related. If you want to go out for a fun night, one of the most popular places is Rochester. There, you can visit the beautiful castle and cathedral, and find a high street full of pubs and clubs where you can hang out with friends over some drinks while giving karaoke a go – why not?

Another popular place is Coopers Bar located inside the campus. The bar, run by GK Unions, is open all day and offers food and drink at very reasonable prices. Coopers also organises theme nights, for example live music on Tuesdays and a comedy night on Thursdays. If you want to have a meal out instead, try the ‘No1’ (Medway building) or Cargo (Liberty Quays) bistros that offer a wide range of good food at affordable prices.

Medway Postgraduate Society
www.facebook.com/groups/medwaypostgraduate
GK Unions
www.gkunions.co.uk/

Postgraduate Research Café
Both campuses
www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/skills/programmes/researchcafe.html

Medway campus only
To access up-to-date events information, search on Facebook for Medway Postgraduate Research Cafe.

Evelina Petitto
PhD in Pharmacy