Editorial

I’m told that summer has come and gone (not that you’d know it!), which means it’s time to welcome you to the autumn edition of the GradPost. Marking the Olympics, we have an interesting piece by Ben Pageaux, detailing a study into mental fatigue and its effect on exercise. New postgraduates should check out the advice offered by existing students at the University of Kent, and read Pamela Head’s ‘Postgraduate Settling-In Guide’.

In the last issue we published an article by Melissa Tortorella comparing the educational experience of students in the US to those in the UK. Continuing with this series, Iana Seales details her experiences at the University of Guyana and her postgraduate life at the University of Kent.

Finally, for all you amateur photographers out there, we are bringing back the photography competition. Same theme as last year; we are looking for beautiful images of places and people in Kent, across all our campuses (Canterbury, Medway, Brussels and Paris). Winning photos will be printed on the cover of future issues of the GradPost (with runners up on the back page), so get snapping if you wish to show off your photography skills.

Chris Costa
PhD Biomedical Imaging

Focus on research

How does mental fatigue limit endurance and performance?

Fatigue can be defined as the difficulty in initiating or sustaining prolonged voluntary activities. This can manifest itself in two forms: physical and mental fatigue.

Physical fatigue is known to limit endurance performance through its negative effect on the nervous, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. This physical fatigue has three major effects. First it reduces the capacity of the nervous system to generate adequate motor commands; second it inhibits the capacity of the cardiovascular system to insure the adequate blood flow to the working muscles; and third it decreases the availability of oxygen by impairing the respiratory system.

The impact of mental fatigue on endurance performance has been under-researched. Mental fatigue can be defined as a subjective feeling of tiredness and lack of energy. Research has highlighted the negative impact of mental fatigue on cognitive performance. Recently, Professor Samuele Marcora, Director of Research in the Centre for Sport Studies, has, for the first time, demonstrated its negative effect on endurance performance (during cycling exercise).

In Professor Marcora’s study 16 participants cycled until exhaustion (the point at which the participant is unable to maintain the exercise). This exercise was conducted either after a highly demanding cognitive task (a timed computer task) or after a simple cognitive task (watching a film). The demanding cognitive task was performed for 90 minutes and required close attention, recall, a quick reaction time and the ability to inhibit a response. Interestingly this cognitive task induced a state of mental fatigue. In other words, subjects exhibited a perception of increased effort following the highly demanding cognitive task. Thanks to these studies, new approaches to understanding endurance performance if no physiological factors were altered?

In both studies the only parameter altered by mental fatigue is the perception of effort during the endurance exercise. In these studies subjects decided to disengage from the task at the point when they reached their maximal exertion. If perception of effort is how hard and heavy we find an exercise, in both situations perception of effort was exacerbated under the condition of mental fatigue. In other words, subjects exhibited a perception of increased effort following the highly demanding cognitive task. Thanks to these studies, new approaches to understanding endurance performance and the place of the brain in regulating performance are emerging.

Benjamin Pageaux
PhD Sport and Exercise Science and Sports Therapy
New postgraduates

Postgraduate settling-in guide

So, you’ve become a student at the University of Kent. You may be wondering what you should be doing now. Here’s some things you’ll want to sort out before arrival, and once you’re here…

1. Once you’ve received your Enrolment email from the Admissions Office, you must enrol online at www.kent.ac.uk/gettingstarted. You’ll need to submit a photograph for your Kent One card (student ID), claim your IT account and, if you’re doing a taught postgraduate programme, you’ll also need to choose your modules. In your email will be a link to the online Getting Started at Kent booklet which guides you through each step of the enrolment process.

2. Documents you’ll need to bring with you:
   - Proof of age (Driving licenace or passport)
   - Accommodation agreement
     If you’re an international student, you’ll need additional documents. Please refer to page 6 of the Getting Started at Kent booklet for further details.

3. Once you have enrolled and claimed your IT account, you should check your timetables which will be on the Student Portal: https://portal.kent.ac.uk/uPortal/. There’ll be a number of events in your Welcome Week programme, including specific postgraduate events hosted by Kent Union and the Universities at Medway Students’ Association (UMSA). You’re also welcome to attend the undergraduate induction events.

4. If you’re studying at Canterbury, you can also sign up online for Sports Centre membership. There are different membership rates available, see www.kent.ac.uk/sports for more information. If you’re in Medway, you can get discounted membership at Medway Park, see http://medwaypark.org.uk/.

Once you’re here…

1. The first thing we recommend is to speak to a Welcome Helper. They’re current Kent students who are there to help you move into your room and help you to find your way around. They’re easy to find as they’ll be wearing brightly coloured t-shirts!

2. To collect your room keys you’ll need to have your accommodation letter and your photo ID ready to show the Accommodation receptionists. Where to collect your keys:
   - Woolf College, The Pavilion (the circular building in the middle of Woolf College); Darwin Houses, Darwin College reception; Liberty Quays, Liberty Quays reception.

3. Now you’ll need to register. You need to go to the Sports Centre (Canterbury campus) or the Pilkington Building (Medway campus) to complete registration. You’ll need your photo ID which will be checked by University staff, and then they’ll give you your KentOne Card.

4. Once you’ve registered, you should then pay your tuition and accommodation fees. If you’re living in private accommodation you will need to contact your landlord to arrange payments.

5. We then recommend you have a look around the information stands in the Sports Centre (Canterbury) and Pilkington Building (Medway) for information about other University services.

There’s a wide mix of people on campus – Kent has students from 140 countries! Welcome Week is the perfect opportunity to get to know the people you’re living with and your fellow classmates, so join in with the events, familiarise yourself with your new home and, most of all, a big welcome to Kent!

One thing I wish I knew when starting...

Starting university in a new place, or on a new course, can be difficult when you don’t know what to expect. We have asked around and found out some of the top things people wish they’d known before starting at the University of Kent/moving into Woolf College (postgraduate accommodation) so you can hopefully avoid some of the problems others have encountered.

“I wish I’d known (for Woolf inhabitants) that the beds are European size (longer and slightly wider than normal beds) so standard fitted sheets are too short for the bed! I had to go out on the day I arrived to buy an annoying flat sheet for my bed!”

Sarah P
MA in English and American Literature

“It’s always going to take longer to write essays than you think it will.”

Katie W
MA in Medieval and Early Modern Studies

“Keep checking your emails, CONSTANTLY. Also, remember there’s at least twice as much research needed for each essay than at undergrad.”

Fawn W
MA in Medieval and Early Modern Studies

“One thing I wish I knew starting postgraduate study was how much of a commitment it would be. I perhaps rather stupidly approached the MA thinking it would be similar to my undergrad. I was thoroughly mistaken.”

Joseph P
MSc in Applied Actuarial Science

“One of the keys things in postgraduate study is that you have to take the initiative in learning.”

Casper YC
MSc in Statistics

“Keep checking your emails. I wish I had been more proactive.”

Patrick T E
MSc in Mobile Application Design

“Get your reading lists before you start the courses, as it takes a long time to get through everything. Also, make sure you put in the hours all term; otherwise you panic when essays come!”

Megan B
MA in Eighteenth Century Studies

As for the advice I’d give, make sure you’ve given some thought as to what your dissertation will be on before the deadline, as it’ll take some of the panic out of having to write a proposal. You’ll be able to use the seminars and lab times efficiently to make notes on something you know you’ll be using later on.

Above all, though, stay calm, keep on top of work and enjoy it as much as possible – you’ve chosen to become a postgraduate, so the opportunity for new experiences and new learning is all around!

Pamela Head
MA Eighteenth Century Studies
Welcome – do get involved

Kent Union

Tom Ritchie, the Kent Union President, hopes you’ll make the most out of being here.

Kent Union is here to represent you while you are at the University of Kent; we are run by students, for students. As well as me, there are four other full-time officers, plus hundreds of part-time volunteers who are here to campaign on issues that matter to you while you study and live here at the University of Kent. We have thousands of volunteers and we want you to get involved through societies, sports clubs and volunteering for good causes.

We are all here to make sure that your experience here at Kent is as fulfilling and enjoyable as possible.

Kent Union also provides a number of services that you can use. These include the Advice Centre, which helps students with budgeting, housing and visa queries, and the Jobshop where students can sign up to find part-time employment to support their studies. As well as these services, we also run the shops Essentials and Unique; nightclubs (The Venue and Attic); Rutherford Bar, Woody’s pub and Coopers bar, the Library Café and a nursery.

The other four full-time officers also contribute a huge amount to making sure that you are represented while at University. Below are their email addresses so that you can contact them to help improve your experience on campus.

Alex Murray is your Vice-President (Education) – union-education@kent.ac.uk
Column McGuire is your Vice-President (Welfare) – union-welfare@kent.ac.uk
Kenny Budd is your Vice-President (Student Activities) – union-activities@kent.ac.uk
Matt Harris is your Vice-President (Sports) – union-sports@kent.ac.uk

To help keep postgraduate issues at the top of the agenda, Kent Union has a dedicated Representation and Postgraduate Student Co-ordinator, Paul Stalker, who is here to help you. He will be delighted to meet with you to discuss ideas and how to get involved. As well as this, we help to support the Graduate Student Association (GSA), and I urge you to get in touch and interact with them during Welcome Week and beyond.

Principally, Kent Union is here to represent you to the University on an array of subjects such as your course, extending the library opening hours and any other issues that you may face. Both Kent Union and the GSA will ensure that you have a voice within the University, but also in the wider local and national communities.

If you have any thoughts on what Kent Union can do for you, or want more information on how to get involved, please contact us by visiting our website at www.kentunion.co.uk or by emailing me at union-president@kent.ac.uk.

Tom Ritchie
Kent Union President

Postgraduate student surveys

Thanks to everyone who completed the PTES (Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey) and PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey).

For completing the surveys six lucky students are randomly selected to receive a stylish iPod Nano complete with a multi-purpose touch screen display and FM radio.

The winners are:
Anisa Cogram
Xue Bai
Wan-Chen Lan
Bahriye Kemal
Valeria Proietti
Nicola Pilkington

The surveys are your chance to have your say. We would like to hear about what the University has done well and where you think improvements could be made. Your comments and views really count and they will be used to enhance the quality of the academic experience for postgraduate students in the future. Look out for the 2013 surveys which will be launched in April/May.

Hi guys, for those who haven’t met me yet, I’m the President of the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

We run Welcome Week and are also responsible for several other events throughout the year. If you have a concern about anything – from your course to your room – you can contact us as a first port of call. We also represent postgraduate students to both Kent Union and the University. We have had a lot of success over the past year, which we hope to keep up. This includes getting wifi trials (and hopefully soon wifi) in Woolf College, moving postgraduate accommodation to Darwin Houses so that postgraduates can live closer together, establishing access to an additional social space in the form of Woolf Foyer and getting pool and table tennis tables for it (I think we are currently the only place on campus where you can play pool free of charge).

We have also run several very successful events, which include the Postgraduate Silent Disco, various postgraduate nights at The Attic, Christmas and Anti-ball parties, film nights, day trips and a charity football event.

If you are interested in getting involved with the GSA, we would love to hear from you. You can email me at cp337@kent.ac.uk or message me on our facebook page ‘Kent Uni Postgraduates GSA’. We have several committee positions open at the moment which need filling or you could volunteer on a more part-time basis – it’s entirely up to you. We also have a College football team, so if you are interested in playing football throughout the year look out for posters advertising Woolf College football trials or get in touch with the team Captain James ’Budgie’ Budge (his email is jb618@kent.ac.uk).

Claire Powell
Graduate Student Association President
Every poster tells a story

Postgraduate Research Festival –
June 2012

The second annual Postgraduate Research Festival, organised by the Graduate School, Kent Union and the Graduate Student Association, proves a great success.

The Postgraduate Research Festival is an opportunity for all postgrads to showcase their research by exhibiting a poster on their area of specialism. This year 37 students exhibited posters and many more turned up to see the posters and attend the talks. This year’s talks covered a variety of subjects: Hannah Swift provided an insight into life outside academia focusing on Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and British Psychological Society (BPS) internships, Dr Fragkiskos Filipaioos from Kent Business School spoke on the publishing process for young researchers, while Dr Dan Mulvihill of Biosciences spoke about exploring the academic and commercial interface. The afternoon was an opportunity for students to present their research, network with other students and increase awareness of the diverse research occurring within the postgraduate community.

Posters were judged by Faculty representatives: Dr Montserrat Roser i Puig judged the Humanities posters, Ian Utting judged the Sciences and Professor Diane Houston the Social Sciences. Winning researchers were awarded a Kindle.

Poster competition winners:
From the Faculty of Humanities Gian Luca Amadei (PhD in Architecture); from the Faculty of Sciences Louise Holyoake (PhD in Microbiology); from the Faculty of Social Sciences Sally Palmer (PhD in Psychology).

‘The PG festival is a fantastic initiative that gives all PhD students the opportunity to have a broader understanding of what is currently going on across the whole university in terms of research. I also felt that mine was not just a personal victory but a success that I shared with my colleagues and Kent’s School of Architecture. With our presence as a School, we showed our commitment and support for the PG Research Festival, and our contribution to the Faculty of Humanities has been recognised.’

Gian Luca Amadei, above, winner of the Humanities poster competition.

‘I felt nervous about the prospect of going to my first conference to present a poster. I understood, however, that it was a rare opportunity to speak with others working in a similar field and wanting to make the most impact. The Postgraduate Research Festival was a great experience for me and I would highly recommend that others take part in it next year. I enjoyed seeing the other students’ posters and I feel it’s a great idea to discuss our work with other postgraduate students no matter what their subject is.’

Louise Holyoake, above, winner of the Sciences poster competition.

‘The Postgraduate Research Festival was a fantastic opportunity to put together a conference poster, and to meet and share my research with other postgraduates from different subjects, in a friendly and relaxed environment. I found the selection of presentations delivered as part of the festival engaging and very useful for students at all stages of their PhD. I’d definitely recommend the festival to all postgraduates, for practising posters and presenting, but also gaining useful advice for the remainder of your studies.’

Sally Palmer, above, winner of the Social Sciences competition.

Broadening scientific horizons: Kent’s balloon mission

The University of Kent has already been involved in space missions and a previous balloon launch. Space missions require long-term investment in time and money – balloon flights do not. Most students do not generally get the opportunity to take part in these types of projects, so the High Altitude Postgraduate Experience was created to launch postgraduate students’ science payloads to the near edge of space for minimal cost. This project brings together students from all academic arenas for unique research and networking opportunities.

We have an open invitation to any postgraduate student who wants to fly a payload, be it biological, chemical, structural, artistic or electronic. Payloads should be small, simple and of minimal mass to enable many to be flown, and completed in time for our first launch planned for September 2012. Contact me at mg350@kent.ac.uk with your ideas.

Since starting the project, which has been funded by a Postgraduate Experience Award, we have bought and tested considerable amounts of electronic equipment and GPS tracking. These, together with a pressure altimeter capable of functioning to a 35km altitude, have been fitted to the platform. A GSM modem will transmit the data to enable remote tracking as the balloon may drift tens to hundreds of miles. Radiosondes have been converted into radio tracking devices so that we can use a Yagi antenna (directional) as a secondary tracking device and to locate the platform after landing. Processing and storage are undertaken by a small open source Arduino prototype board and a micro SD card. Power is supplied by lightweight lithium ion batteries and the entire structure insulated to maintain the internal temperature at a level sufficient for the electronics to function correctly at altitude. The platform also has three cameras, including one to record images of the Earth horizon in flight.

We have undertaken our first test flight using smaller balloons to examine launch and inflation techniques. The 12 megapixel camera and the tracking device functioned correctly and the video and pictures can be seen on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/highaltitudeballoon. Feel free to link to us.

Remember your University High Altitude balloon needs your payload! Join up and see the world.

Michael Gillham
PhD Electronic Engineering
Diverse programme proves a rewarding experience

The Global Skills Award, run by the Graduate School, is open to all taught Master’s students. It features lectures and workshops designed to enhance the participants’ awareness of global issues and improve their employability prospects.

To achieve the award all students have to complete an online skills assessment and attend a lecture series, delivered by leading academics, business experts and current affairs specialists. Lectures this year on the programme, which ran between October and April, covered a variety of topics from economics, the Middle East, extremism, genetics and cloning to international adoption and humanitarian issues. Next year’s programme promises to be just as diverse. Alongside the lectures, students also attended a series of workshops. These ranged from developing writing, presentation and communication skills; understanding leadership, careers management, team working and networking; to specific guidance on CV writing and interview techniques. As well as online lecture evaluations, students also reflected on skills developed in workshops via an online questionnaire. This process allowed participants to create a document which recorded their development over the year and reflections on their learning.

This year 176 students completed the programme and celebrated their achievement with a certificate presentation ceremony on 18th June, led by Professor Diane Houston, Dean of the Graduate School. The ceremony also featured thoughtful and inspiring reflections on the award by participants Constance De Crombrugghe and Jude Agyiri. In response to the award, Gary Goldfinch, from Politics and International Relations, said: ‘I really enjoyed the GSA, it really gave me some useful life skills. Because I have worked in business before I know that the skills covered by the programme were useful.’ Emma Wilkins, from the School of English, especially enjoyed the workshops. “The GSA was fantastic, it was a great opportunity and the lectures were very interesting… my favourite element was the workshops; I really enjoyed them, they were fantastic across the board.”

Further information is available about the GSA at www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/skills/programmes/gsacurrent.html

Learn new skills

The Graduate School co-ordinates the Researcher Development Programme for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. The programme is designed to equip participants with a full range of skills, which will improve their effectiveness as researchers, and ensure that they are not only highly qualified but employable in a variety of careers by the end of their research project. The programme features a broad range of workshops designed to hone skills such as negotiation, communication, career management, leadership and time management.

The Researcher Development Programme is provided for all postgraduate research students, whether full- or part-time, including Master’s, MPhil or PhD and for postdoctoral researchers.

To participate in the RDP researchers will need to register with the Graduate School’s online booking system, https://bloom.kent.ac.uk.
From Georgetown to Canterbury: a long road to travel but well worth the journey

When you leave home, in my case Guyana, to study abroad, the label ‘being privileged’ is attached to your name and, in a tiny community in Georgetown, the capital, you become a minor celebrity. The days of being ‘the girl with the warm smile’ are over, suddenly you’re the girl ‘who is off to get her degree on a fancy course’ that most people can’t remember the name of.

The fact that you don’t feel privileged, and that the course you are studying is called Conflict Resolution, does not change anything; you are the girl who is lucky to go to England. I hardly felt lucky growing up, and by the time I was in secondary school, I questioned whether there is such a thing as luck, or just hard work finally paying off.

I booked my ticket to the University of Kent through hard work and when I got here I initially forgot what that meant. To tell the story properly, I will start from my undergrad years at the University of Guyana (UG) where I learnt how to score an impressive GPA (Grade Point Average) under uninspiring circumstances.

I remember the first day I walked into the UG campus, my eyes scanning a decrepit building a few yards away and my spirits sinking. ‘Is this where we study in this country?’ I asked aloud hoping someone close by would answer me. No one did. I too would grow apathetic in two years’ time; it is what happens to you when your academic environment becomes a breeding ground for adversarial politics and little or no attention is paid to the institution as it disintegrates, both figuratively and literally.

The campus was like a tale out of a sad film, people walking around with long faces, old buildings at almost every turn and an archive re-branded as a library. In some ways, the campus was like the country; it had tremendous potential but was stuck in a slump due to a lack of vision, divisive politics and ineffective leadership. My expectations were not very high, but they were not as low as what stared me in the face.

I saw a few people smiling along the walkways and wondered if they had somehow managed to find something to smile about. I wanted to run back to the bus which got me there and delay my studies for a few more years when I could afford to study at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. I was debating whether to make a run for it when someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, ‘You look lost. It’s a puzzle at first, but in the end you won’t regret the decision.’ I looked around to find a strange guy smiling at me.

Maybe God sent him. I returned the smile, thanked him, and signed up for a degree in International Relations. I found out during my four years on campus that there are students who are so passionate about learning that even lousy library resources were not going to determine whether they got As. I met lecturers who though frustrated with the politics being played out on the campus, showed up every day and on time to prepare the next generation of leaders.

Core text books were so scarce in the library you had to use them in there and return them the next day if your research was incomplete, and the journal collections were nearly as old me. But there were also lecturers who would show up in class with personal copies of textbooks for the students. Many students would pool money to buy additional resources just so a course could be completed in time without having to go through the bureaucracy on campus.

When I was leaving to come to the University of Kent my only concern was what the English weather would be like. I knew from the information sent to me in the mail that the campus was like a scene out of John Keats’ To Autumn, and that the institution was regarded as among the best the UK has to offer in higher education. I soon realised that the level of education here was bars higher than anything I had come up against at home and I was gratified.

I remember my first Federalism lecture with Professor Michael Burgess and how he struck me as one of the finest minds I had met. From that one lecture I was worried about how much hard work I really had to put in, and suddenly I started to think about that word luck and how I might need it to get through this graduate degree.

What I found interesting about Kent was the seminar sessions. I found them fascinating and stimulating. I loved the Templeman Library from the first day. I wandered around and took a sniff of the vast books and journal collections.

The first Skype conversation I had with my mom, I blabbered on for some 30 minutes about the layout of the gym, the computers in the library, the fabulous lecture theatres, especially Woof, and the bars on campus, the cinema, and how beautiful Park Wood was. I told her the English weather was unpredictable and at times too cold for this Caribbean girl, but that I liked it here. What I really meant was that I liked it here at Kent; it is a world created just for us students.

As my experience here at Kent comes to a close I realise that I will miss the environment and all the support within it. I will miss some of the lecturers and a few of the smiling faces that greeted me in the campus shops. I will miss the Templeman Library, which is being upgraded, and will be even more inviting in two years. I will miss Father Peter Geldard and the wonderful Sunday potluck lunches at St John Stone house after Sunday Mass.

Back home in Guyana we earn our degrees walking a road very few in the developed world even know exists, but many of us persevere, which is why I know that graduating top three in my class at UG and earning a scholarship to study in England had nothing to do with luck. When I get home I will tell the people in my community that luck had nothing to do with it, I got to England the old fashioned way – it was all hard work.

Iana Seales
MA International Conflict Analysis
Do you want to know more about Latin America?

Curious about the diversity of its culture, its landscapes, its amazing natural heritage?

Be prepared for November at the University of Kent, you don't want to miss it!

Margarita Zethelius
MSc Conservation and Rural Development

Forthcoming postgraduate events

Theory, Action and Impact of Social Protest: An Interdisciplinary Conference

is just a few months away and already we have had a positive response.

We have received over 130 abstracts from a variety of disciplines, from more than 34 different countries and from over 100 different universities. We also have received additional funding from Kent Law School and the Centre for Law Gender and Sexuality. Thanks to these kind contributions we will be able to expand the conference to a larger audience and provide an academic atmosphere that can facilitate greater interdisciplinary interaction. We would like to remind everyone that attendance is open to all postgraduates and we hope everyone who is interested will come and participate in the panel discussions.

The conference represents the first step in a long-term project including a new online peer-reviewed journal: Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest.

Thanks to the Postgraduate Experience Award we have the necessary initial funds to accelerate this new and important project. Contention will aim to stimulate debate about social protest across the Social Sciences and Humanities. We hope that this initiative will bring together scholars and postgraduate researchers from all around the world, allowing them to publish their research, make their contribution to the development of this topic and broach gaps in the field. We also hope that this initiative will positively reinforce the University of Kent’s status as a pillar of excellence and innovation.

Eugene Nulman
MPhil Sociology

Cover photograph by Gina Maharaj (LLM Public International Law), back page photograph by Justine Lemoine (MA Creative Writing). Thank you to our winners and runners-up for all your wonderful images. We invite you to email your photographs of all our campuses (Canterbury, Medway, Brussels and Paris) and the surrounding areas to us. We are looking for inspiring and beautiful images associated with the campus or the student experience at Kent. Entries should be sent to grad-editors@kent.ac.uk They will be judged by 1 November 2012.