Congratulations to the following students who have been awarded prizes by the Faculty of Social Sciences for their performance in their Stage 1 examinations:–

Sophie Guarella  Katherine Wilson
Emma Jago  Amy King
Lydia Creasey  Sam Stantiall
Sian Holmes

Robert Brotherton was awarded the Ede & Ravenscroft Prize for his performance in the Stage 1 examinations. Ede & Ravenscroft supply the gowns for all of Kent’s graduation ceremonies and the prize is awarded annually, rotating from one Faculty to another each year.

Finally, Rasa Mikelyte is the recipient of the Kent Co-Operative Endowment Prize, for her achievement in the Stage 1 examinations.

Rotary prizes go to Rose Meleady, Katherine Williams and Rhea Young for outstanding results in their Stage 1 examinations.

UNISTATS

Visit the UNISTATS website and you will be pleased to see that Psychology at Kent has done very well indeed.

Student satisfaction is a huge 90%, compared to 89% at Surrey; 85% at Bristol; 84% at Royal Holloway; 82% at Essex and only 66% at Manchester. Coupled with that figure is the fact that 58% achieve a graduate job after 6 months, compared to 50% at Surrey; 45% at East Anglia; 44% at Reading and only 37% at Royal Holloway.

If you are interested, you’ll find it at:–

http://www.unistats.com/

British Federation of Women Graduates

Each year the local group of the British Federation of Women Graduates gives a prize of £100 to a mature student from either Psychology or Economics who achieved the best results in their second year.

Congratulations go to Beverley Kirk who, having been nominated by the Psychology Department, was presented with the award on Friday, 14th December 2007.

Present at the ceremony were Sigi Martin, Head of Department, David Reason, Master of Keynes College and various other members of staff.

You may have noticed that the campus is littered with ‘Was it good for you?’ flyers, designed to draw your attention to the National Student Survey 2008, and to encourage you to take part.

The National Student Survey (NSS) is targeted at final year undergraduates and provides students with an opportunity to express their views about their experience of university and course of study. The results are used to compile a year-on-year comparison of data which helps prospective students make informed choices of where and what to study. The data also feed into the material used to establish the league tables of UK Universities – which are important to both prospective students and employers of graduates.

In order to ensure a high response rate to the survey, Kent has developed a Departmental Award Scheme. When Departmental response rates reach 65%, this will earn the Department an award of £1 per student who has completed the survey. There will also be a shares fund (£20k) which will be distributed on the basis of a sliding scale of shares per participating student (e.g. 66-70% = 0.5 shares per student, increasing up to 95-100% = 5 shares per student). There will also be an award for the Department with the most improved response rate, but as Psychology had a high level of participation last year, I think we may not manage to win this (but you never know!!).

So, not only have you an opportunity to express your views about your experiences at Kent, you also have the chance to win some money for the Department. The money can only be used for student-focused activities, and once we know how much we have ‘earned’, we will ask you for suggestions and use the staff-student liaison committee to decide on how we might spend it.

Last year, Psychology at Kent obtained fairly high ratings on the NSS and this has had a very positive effect on how the Department is viewed by prospective students and employers as well as league tables. Please do try to find the time to complete the survey, it only takes around five minutes and can be found at:

www.kent.ac.uk/survey

Professor Diane Houston
Head of Department
Wisdom from a final year student!

Ruth Dempster is in her final year and has produced the following article for all those starting out at University.

I’m finally in my final year after what seems like a lifetime at university. I am doing an applied degree (applied social psychology to be precise!) and this means I spent my third year in industry working with a psychologist in the field. This means I am now in my final and fourth year of uni. Like I said it seems like a lifetime since I joined, but I would not change anything I’ve done in these last four years.

I fell in love with Kent as soon as I laid eyes on the campus. It was my first choice and I haven’t regretted it once.

Before coming to uni, I had no experience of psychology, but don’t regret choosing that either.

The department are amazing. They are so helpful and really passionate about what they teach. I never hesitate emailing them with questions, or asking to see them for help. They provided so much support for me over the last four years, especially with my placement year. I spent this year working under an educational psychologist at a school for dyslexic children. It was definitely a shock to the system of two years of uni, but I came out of the year a stronger person, both mentally and academically.

The thing I found the best was the fact that, even though I had no lectures, I could still email the lecturers about their areas of interest and they would really try and help me, no matter what it was.

Academics aside, Kent also has so much more to offer. I really subscribe to that cliché that you will meet your friends for life at uni. My closest friends I met all in freshers’ year. I have so many fond memories, that it is enough alone to make uni worth while. My best bit of advice is just talk to everyone you meet.

My best friend is actually the kind of person that, when at sixth form, I wouldn’t have spoken to. But now I don’t think I could have survived uni without her. The other bit of advice is don’t be afraid to try new things, join different societies and have as much fun as you can, especially in your first year.

Oh and the last piece, almost the most valuable - invest in a coat with a hood and a hat! It gets far too windy on campus for umbrellas!

Bayo Riley is studying BSc Applied Psychology with Clinical Psychology and is spending his placement in-house. He has kindly written down this article. It’s great that we are really starting to receive contributions from students, as well as staff - please keep them coming!

This year, I have assisted one of the members of staff in the Department (Dr. Ulrich Weger) in running Cognitive Research projects. Although, I initially viewed this with apprehension and dread, the experience has been more rewarding than I had expected. The placement still throws up a lot of challenges, however I am lucky to have the support of a very good Supervisor assisting me in the Department.

This placement has been a fresh insight into the workings of the Psychology Department. As a second year undergraduate, I felt more like a Student in the Department, being told what to read, what essays to submit and what to study in order to achieve good marks in my exams. In all honesty, I felt I could probably live with not having to study Cognitive Psychology again, although this year has produced some interesting research in this area of Psychology.

As an Undergraduate Researcher, I have experienced a different perspective on the Psychology Department. This year is much more focused on developing my own ideas and working on new ways of thinking. It’s quite daunting having to structure my learning in this way, but it’s good to take a break from the usual routine of lectures and seminars. I do miss the opportunity of working with other Undergraduates, but I have had the chance to interact with some of my third year peers on the problems of running research experiments. It has also made me feel less intimidated about the whole research process and conducting my own research project in the final year.

One of the highlights of the year has been the Research Seminars. As a first and second year undergraduate, I viewed these with a lot of trepidation, but there have been some interesting speakers and they link into some unique areas of Psychology such as the perception of Music and the association between numbers and space, which has enabled me to see the connection between what we learned in lectures and real life applications of Psychology.

Overall, I have enjoyed my year so far as an Undergraduate Researcher and it has made me more confident about an area of Psychology with which I had previously struggled. It has been enjoyable interacting with the PhD Students and having the support of my Supervisor has made the work less daunting than it would otherwise have been. I don’t know what I want to do just yet, but I am sure the experience will prove useful in any future career.

My life as an undergraduate researcher

Viva News

The following Postgraduate students have successfully defended their PhD theses and so many congratulations go to:-

Rachel Calogero - Development and validation of an implicit lexical measure of need for cognitive closure: a motivated social cognition approach. Rachel's external examiner was Professor Michael Hogg from Claremont, Los Angeles.

Dan Frings - Responding to ingroup deviance: the effects of personal risk, social support and power upon persuasion action tendency. Dan's external examiner was Professor José Marques from Universidade do Porto, Portugal. Dan is now a lecturer at London South Bank University.

Christos Mitsakis - Humour styles and health: investigating the “specificity hypothesis” in the relationship between humour and health. Christo's external examiner was Dr. Mark Copley from the University of Surrey.
Congratulations to...

Lindsey Cameron who has been awarded a small grant from the World Education Development Group. The project is entitled “Attitude is everything”.

Mark van Vugt who has been made an Associate Editor of the flagship APA journal “Journal of Personality and Social Psychology” which is the highest ranked empirical journal in social/personality psychology. His term of office started on 1st January 2008 and will be for three years.

Ulrich Weger who has just been awarded a British Academy Grant of £7,197 in connection with a research project entitled “Counter-directional eye movement during reading”.

Ana Guinote and Mario Weick have just been awarded a Nuffield Foundation grant of £7,416 in connection with their research into “Perfectionism and goal orientations in athletes: Relations with approach and avoidance orientations in mastery and performance goals.”

Kate Hamilton-West who has just been awarded a NIHR grant of £69,800 to look into “Improving concordance in older people with type-2 diabetes”.

New York Times

Joachim Stoeber was quoted in the Health section of the New York Times at the beginning of January in connection with a study, published this month in the Psychology journal Anxiety, Stress & Coping which surveyed 118 German schoolteachers who had been teaching for an average of 20 years.

The stress teachers face is often blamed on badly behaved students but this new research suggests that some stress can come from parents. The questionnaires were designed to assess personality traits like perfectionism. It has been found that teachers who feel pressure to be perfect are more likely to take time off through stress or leave the profession. Although the data was collected from German schools, the researchers have found that the problems such as the demands of teaching, problem students and interfering parents are worldwide.

“Teachers should focus on their students’ expectations and needs and get support from colleagues if they feel overwhelmed, but not try to make overly demanding parents happy”.

http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/02/teacher-burnout-blame-the-parents/
At the beginning of this term, the Department heard the very sad news of the death of Sara Alves and as a tribute to her, we have decided to print the article she wrote which appeared in the March 2007 issue. During her time at Kent, Sara was a very popular member of the Department who made a major contribution. She was one of the student representatives and attended Departmental meetings, actively participating in discussions. Not only that, she always had a smile on her face and had an excellent positive attitude to life.

"It had been over ten years since I left school when I decided to retake my studies. All the usual questions ran through my head: ‘will I be able to cope with the amount of university work’, ‘will I be able to financially support myself’, ‘will I be able to get good results?’

After I started university, I realised that mature students are likely to have acquired many good skills that they can use in a successful way throughout this challenging journey (e.g., independence, time management and communication skills). And the good news is that all these skills will be further improved with your experience at university.

Almost 20% of full-time undergraduates (and most part-time undergraduates) are classed as ‘mature’ students. I will not lie to you: it is ‘hard work’ (more for some students than others), but the experience is rewarding. My secret has been to know where I can get support from, when I need some. It is important to know what Kent University has to offer and how welcoming and supportive the relevant staff can be.

Some services, which are open to all students, including: The Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching – UELT (www.kent.ac.uk/uilt); Students’ Union – SU (www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/gwaz.htm#STUDENTSSUNION); Careers advice service (www.kent.ac.uk/careers); The Oaks Day Nursery is situated on campus; Counselling Service (counselling@kent.ac.uk); The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (accessibility@kent.ac.uk), Job Shop (www.kentunionjobshop.co.uk), and of course Student Reps. (you can find other Student Support Services on www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/gwaz.htm).

In the beginning, I attended many of the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching sessions, including: Essay and Report Writing; Research Skills; Effective Study; Projects and Team Work and Stress and Time Management. But most importantly, I have learnt enormously by working with my colleagues (no matter what age or background they are).

Ever since our first year, we have organized studying sessions. We learned a lot from each other by discussing our ideas, swapping revision notes, our essays and questions to prepare for our scary exams.

This has been one of the best experiences of my life. The highlight of my journey has been: ‘learning with others and sharing what I already know with them’. However, I have a secret that has kept me going, I took lots of coffee breaks and salsa dancing lessons.

Work with your colleagues and ask advice from lecturers, students in years ahead, staff (most are very welcoming and when you ask them for advice, you will wonder why you had not done it before. They all want you to succeed!). “

Tribute to Sara Alves

Sara graduated in July 2007 with a 2:1 in BSc Psychology and here we have featured some shots, courtesy of Keith Franklin, showing Sara on her graduation day at the Psychology Drinks Reception, by the pond outside of Keynes College on 11th July, 2007.