You may well have noticed that the campus is decorated with posters, designed to draw your attention to the National Student Survey 2009, and to encourage you to take part.

The National Student Survey (NSS) is targeted mostly 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 graduate employers.

What’s in it for me?

To encourage a high response rate to the survey, there will be a reward/incentive scheme to maximise participation. Each student who completes the survey and produces the receipt from IPSOS Mori to nss-reward@kent.ac.uk will receive £5. On top of this, those who complete the survey will also be entered into a weekly prize draw (lasting 8 weeks). There will be some fantastic prizes (e.g. ipods/Wii/DS/mobile phones, etc.) and winners will be drawn from the pool each week.

What’s in it for us all?

The three Departments at the University with the highest participation rates will also receive a “cash bonus”. So, not only have you an opportunity to express your views about your experiences at Kent, you’ll also have the chance to win a prize, and some money for the Department. Any money the Department receives from this fund will only be used for activities designed to enhance the student experience - and we’ll be asking you for suggestions as to how to spend it if we get within the top three departments.

What difference does it make?

As a Department, we have made a real push this year to listen to your feedback – through your student reps, the internal surveys, and informal lunches. We’ve seen more staff-student social events (e.g. the summer rounders match, the final year Christmas Karaoke party, and the 1st year BBQ) and new academic initiatives, such as the hugely popular Research Experience Scheme. All of these new activities have arisen, either wholly or in part, from talking - and listening - to you.

In 2008, we received a wonderful NSS rating – which was instrumental in us being ranked the 8th best Psychology Department in the UK in the Guardian’s league table. We believe, along with our other initiatives, this position has had a very positive effect on how the Department is viewed by prospective and current students, as well as employers. The figures show us that applications to Kent to study Psychology have risen by 60% this year, and 96% of graduates were either in employment and/or further study 6 months after graduation. We are committed to maintaining – and furthering – these successes, and we know that to do that we need to listen to you. So please do try to find the time to complete the survey, it only takes about five minutes and can be found at:

www.thestudentsurvey.com

Professor Richard Crisp
Head of Department
Postgraduate Study in the Department of Psychology

Magnus Emil Fossum, Norway. BSc Psychology from University of Oslo. MSc Social and Applied Psychology

Almost four months have passed since I came to Canterbury to begin my MSc in Social Psychology. I have had a taste of postgraduate life; its novel challenges, as well as its similarities to undergraduate studies. Now I am about to conduct my own research for the first time, and am busy learning statistical procedures that will help me make sense of my results. Pausing for a moment between the pages of my lecture material, I recall the scenic route that brought me to Canterbury.

I first came to the University of Kent in 2007, then only for a term as a part of my Bachelor’s degree in Oslo. Pleased with the social and academic environment at Kent, I devoted some thoughts to postgraduate studies and discussed research topics with lecturers at the Department. This proved fruitful, as the idea of a Kentish MSc ripened in my mind during the last term of my Bachelors degree, and gave me enough time to prepare an application. Besides its advantage of being one year shorter than its Norwegian equivalent, the MSc at Kent struck me as the most exciting option; featuring an academic atmosphere that I knew was highly engaging, and being placed in a picturesque town that would bring me closer to my British roots.

Having spent quite some time at the university by now, I am certain that coming here was the right choice. First, I am impressed by the Department’s expertise in social psychology. This has been a major draw for me because I have been able to study specific topics that interest me, such as the influence of unconscious processes on social behaviour, how people form impressions of others they meet, and how people act when they are in groups. Although I was able to study some of this in Norway as well, it could not match the depth and scope of what was taught at Kent.

Most of the courses I have taken so far at the University have been very interesting, but just as importantly they have been served in an appetising manner. Already during my first months here I realised that the Psychology Department is not an ivory tower that launches knowledge and expects students to catch it. Rather, it is an interactive arena where lecturers convey their knowledge to students in a manageable yet rich format. Because the seminars are quite small, it has been easy to get to know people, and it has been invaluable to share everything from mutual understanding to fleeting confusion of the lecture material.

At the moment myself and my class are focused on impending exams in statistics, as well as preparation of our research projects. This will definitely keep us busy, but I am certain that we in hindsight will see how privileged we are to be on an MSc at the University of Kent. I am convinced that grasping the academic opportunities that are offered at Kent is a very good decision, and that with sustained motivation the path can be paved for a future career in academia.

If you are thinking of doing a postgraduate course or know of someone who is, there is an Open Day on Saturday 7th February from 11-3 in Darwin College conference suite.

It will be a good opportunity to see what Kent offers and also speak to the departmental staff and pick their brains on subjects and what you would be doing.

If you are unable to attend and would like information on postgraduate studies please contact the department on 01227 827709 or email us at psypgadmissions@kent.ac.uk

The Department looks forward to the next event, which the editor has on good authority will be the 2nd Annual Students and Staff Rounders Match! We hope to see you there!

The Psychology Department’s Christmas Party

The Department held a Christmas get together on 15 December. It was a huge success with a good turnout by both students and staff. For those of you who didn’t make it, there were bar snacks and vouchers for a free drink on offer which proved very popular.

The event had a karaoke in which many people took part and sang their favourite songs!

Below - Four members of staff gave us a very enthusiastic rendition of Bananarama’s ‘Venus’

Above - are (l-r) Dr Dirk Janssen, Dr Mike Forrester, Prof. Adam Rutland, Olga Zubko, Malgorzata Goclowska, Yvonne Skipper and Shekela Palmer.
Congratulations to....

Lindsey Cameron who, together with her collaborator, Race Equality Sandwell, has been awarded a grant from the Big Lottery Fund for £250,000 for a project entitled “Tackling racism amongst adolescents: a route to greater well-being”.

Well done to Lindsey!

Georgina Randsley de Moura who has been appointed as a member for the BPS Research Board. The Research Board makes an important contribution within the discipline working on areas such as ethical requirements and research training. The Research Board also has impact on the wider scientific community, particularly through its liaison with relevant funding bodies and policy makers.

Many congratulations to Olga Zubko and Van Chaikalis, who have both won a Postgraduate Study Visit Award of £600 each from the BPS. Olga is travelling to Harvard in the Spring and Van is taking a trip to New York in February. This is brilliant news as only 6 are awarded each year, with only 2 being given for non-European trips.

The Experimental Psychology Society had already pledged £1,200 Olga’s trip and Van has already been granted approximately £670 from the European Association of Social Psychology .

Well done to both Olga and Van!

Well done to Katerina Tasiopoulou who has successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled ‘An integrative cross-national examination of the antecedents of perceived intergroup threat & prejudice towards immigrants’. Katerina’s examiners were Professor Nick Emler of the University of Surrey and our very own Dr Roger Giner-Sorolla.

Congratulations to Dirk Janssen who has just been awarded a grant of £12,704 from the Department of Health for his work as a statistician on the project entitled "National Evaluation of Partnerships for Older People Projects: supporting the administration and analysis of the Quality of Life Tool" this is just part of a larger grant in collaboration with PSSRU, who are running this project for the Department of Health.

**Well done Ulrich!**

Together with colleagues from another department, Dr Ulrich Weger has received a large AHRC grant.

Dr Anna Katharina Schaffner (Comparative Literature) and Dr Ulrich Weger (Psychology) have secured a £440,000 grant from the AHRC’s Beyond Text scheme in collaboration with three researchers based at the University of Dundee.

The project, entitled ‘Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition’ involves researchers from Schools of English, Comparative Literature, Psychology and Fine Art in a 2-year partnership between the University of Kent and the University of Dundee. It will combine the methods of literary criticism, creative practice and human experimental psychology to study a wide range of works: digital poetry, books of poetry and photography, artists’ books and concrete and pattern poetry. Involving poets, artists, scholars, scientists, students and members of the public, it will explore some of the rich interactions of text and image in contemporary culture, and produce both creative and analytical results, to be made available through exhibitions, new works of art, a website and an on-line gallery.

**School Visit**

The Psychology Department received a visit from The Oakwood Park Grammar School arrived at 10am on 22nd January and Dr Tirza Leader gave them her “Love talk”, focused on attraction, intimacy and body shapes. It was obvious that the students really enjoyed it and it was an ideal topic for this age range.

The students took a short break and Kate Mansfield spoke to them about University choices- quite a few had already applied to Kent. Following this, Dr Lindsey Cameron gave a talk about her work with the BBC’s “Child of our Time” and the talk was well received. Handouts were provided and the audience were really involved. The talk was rounded off with a short DVD clip.

The school really appreciated the time given and I would think we might see some Oakwood Park students in September 2009! Well done to Kate, Tirza and Lindsey.

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Recent Publications


In July 2008 I graduated from UKC with a BSc Psychology with Studies in Europe, a 4-year degree that involved studying at a university in Madrid for a year. Thinking back about my time at Kent I would say that the most challenging and also the most rewarding experience for me was my final year (except for the challenge of studying Psychology in Spanish!). It was then that I got to work on something that I was really interested in and my advice to those who have not decided on a topic yet is to think hard about this and not leave it too late.

Having spent a lot of time living, working and studying abroad, I was able to meet people of different cultures and people who were living away from their home countries. I became interested in how these kinds of experiences influenced and changed people so I decided that for my project I wanted to explore scientifically the positive effects that can occur after spending extensive periods of time in a foreign country.

Working closely with a supervisor seemed a bit daunting at first. However, I started to enjoy working on my project and experiencing how my initially very vague idea turned into a specific research study. There were times when I felt that it wasn’t going anywhere and that I would not be able to complete it on time but looking back now I think that the sense of achievement I felt when it was finally handed in made it all worthwhile.

This year I am doing my masters at the University of Oxford. I am now in the Humanities because I wanted to acquire knowledge about an entirely new topic before entering the working environment.

Being able to directly compare a social science with a humanities degree has proven to be interesting, challenging and at times frustrating – most of all however it has made me appreciate and value my Psychology degree even more. For example, I have benefited greatly from my knowledge of empirical research methods and have also realized that it can be very useful to have some knowledge of statistics!

A while ago my supervisor here asked me where I had studied before coming to Oxford and her reaction to my response was “Oh, Psychology at Kent! I hear they have a very good department over there” and I couldn’t agree more.

Vanessa Walsh, Kent Graduate

Above: Vanessa (right) with her friend at Matriculation in Oxford.

Success at the Applied Evening in December

On 1 of December 2008 the Psychology Department held an event for Applied students. The aim was to give first and second years an opportunity to learn about the placement year from students who are currently on placement. Here, one of our first year Applied Psychology students, Precious Nwosisi, reports on the evening.

I was really impressed by the numbers of First and Second year students who attended. Placement students and supervisors gave presentations about their placement experiences, together with poster displays. The presentations and posters mainly focused on: how the students identified and secured their placements, interview tips, and what their placement involved. This included things like working with patients, attending multi-agency meetings, administering diagnostic tests to patients and making treatment service posters. The students worked in a range of settings including clinical (e.g. a Mother and Baby Psychiatric Unit), educational settings and forensic placements (Holloway Prison). The students emphasised what they gained from their placement and had some useful words of advice.

“I hoped to show the students how exciting and life-changing the placement year can be, and to learn about this from their fellow students,” said Dr Lindsey Cameron, Applied Degree Co-ordinator.

Following the presentations, refreshments were available as we looked at the posters, talked and asked the placement students questions. It was a great experience, as it gave us the chance to bond with other applied students. Furthermore, we were also networking, handing out our email addresses to potential supervisors.

In my opinion the evening was very useful, informative and successful, and the presentations were enthusiastically delivered. This added to my motivation, and made me realise how hardworking I have to be in order to find a placement. Reflecting on the evening, and all the information and advice we were given, I excitedly look forward to my own placement, and I am sure that my fellow course mates who attended are as well.

Special thanks to Precious Nwosisi, Jennifer Ashton, Laura Bailey (all pictured), Freia Schulz and Hetal Mehta, who selflessly helped set up and pack everything away at the end of the night. Thanks also to Kate Mansfield, Dr Lindsey Cameron and the Psychology Department for funding the event.

Kent Psychologist

The Department of Psychology’s Newsletter is for students and staff. We welcome contributions from both staff and students for future issues. If you would like to write an article or have any news you’d like to share, please contact Nigel Dorrington.

Department of Psychology, Keyne College University of Kent, CANTERBURY, Kent. CT2 7NP

Email: n.s.dorrington-20@kent.ac.uk
Telephone: 01227 824775

Workshops for final year students

The department is providing a series of extra-curricular workshops for final year students. These workshops are designed to give students a little helping hand for specific things they need this term. There will be a couple of drop-in sessions offering advice and guidance on statistical analyses of final year project data. There will also be a session on literature searches and on CV development and selling your skills! More details to be released soon.