A very Happy Easter and good luck in the exams!

We hope you enjoy our third issue of the newsletter and we are delighted that it also contains contributions from students - please keep us informed. Have a great break and enjoy the Easter Festivities, returning refreshed and ready for your exams!

Psychology Star!

Natalie Semour, a second year Psychology student, was one of three students from the University of Kent’s Partnership Sports Scholarship programme who were among the Team GB ladies hockey gold medal winners at the Australian Youth Olympic Festival in January. Captained by Natalie, the team also featured Hayley Brown (Biomedical Sciences) and Natasha Brennan (English Literature), all three of whom entered the University on a Canterbury Ladies Hockey Club Scholarship.

“We are all extremely proud of Natalie, Hayley and Natasha, who are now back and working hard on their studies. Not only were they selected to represent their sport at the national level but they went on to become an integral part of a decisive victory and a truly unique experience - one that will stand them in good stead for the future. All three are very dedicated and I hope to see them representing GB in the Olympics, hopefully Beijing but definitely London 2012”.

Mike Wilkins, Director of Sport.

Natalie, who is in her second year of the BSc Psychology, has played for the Canterbury Hockey Club for three years, having previously played for Maidstone which is her home town. We wish Natalie the best of luck and look forward to hearing more of her success on the hockey pitch!

Election Result!

Congratulations go to Sam Leivers, 2nd year Psychology student who was voted in as Ethics and Environmental officer in the recent student elections. Sam received a staggering 1,265 votes! The position of Ethics and Environmental Officer is a new part-time position created by student vote at the Annual General Meeting a few weeks ago. When asked, Sam said “As the first ever E & E Officer, I will be taking an active role in recycling, conservation and Fairtrade on campus and working closely with Kent Union's Welfare Sabbatical.” Sam will also be developing campaigns to educate and inform us all on the choices we make and what we can all do to be that little bit more environmentally friendly. There is a RARE conservation group display in Keynes atrium, for those interested. Please contact Sam with any ideas, questions and feedback regarding any of the environmental issues on campus. (sjl32@kent.ac.uk).

On your bike!

With the environment and global warning on the agenda in Whitehall, it seems that the University of Kent’s Psychology Department are doing their bit already, as Lizanne Allcock discovered this week!

Amongst the staff in the Department, there are 8 who regularly cycle to work and 2 who do so occasionally. Pretty amazing that one of those actually cycles back to Dover in the summer, no mean feat!

The good news is that the Editor has it on good authority that Estates have funding in their budget for bike storage facilities at Keynes, which might encourage more in the future!

From left to right, Dinkar Sharma, James Burr, Mike Forrester, Hannie van Hooff, David Wilkinson and Mario Weick. Unable to attend the photo shoot due to other commitments: Dirk Janssen and Mark van Vugt who are both keen Cycling Psychologists!
Kent has been in the news recently thanks to research conducted by Mark van Vugt. Having a common enemy brings out the best in men, his study has shown. According to his research group, men bond together and cooperate well in the face of adversity to protect their interests more than women, which could explain why war is almost exclusively a male business. “Men respond more strongly to outward threats, we’ve labelled that the ‘man warrior effect,’” he told the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting.

“Men are more likely to support a country going to war. Men are more likely sign up for the military and men are more likely to lead groups in more autocratic, militaristic ways than women,” he added.

Mark van Vugt said the finding is consistent with results from different behavioural science disciplines.

In experiments with 300 university men and women students, van Vugt and his team gave the volunteers small sums of money which they could either keep or invest in a common fund that would be doubled and equally divided. None of the students knew what the others were doing.

Both sexes cooperated in investing in the fund. But when the groups were told they were competing against other universities, the males were more eager to invest rather than keep their money while the number of women contributing remained the same. “We all know males are more aggressive than females” van Vugt said, adding that co-operation is needed to establish institutions and governments and to wage wars. “Male co-operation is a double-edged sword,”

Mark’s research has received coverage on the BBC, Fox and CNN, as well as main international and national newspapers.

Media Coverage

Caption Competition

Here we have our cycling Psychologists again in a slightly different shot. There will be a prize of £20 for the best captions sent in!

Please email Lizzanne Alcock (l.alcock@kent.ac.uk). The winner will be judged by a panel and those who send in three good quotes, one for each of our cyclists, will stand the best chance of winning!

Deadline for entries will be the start of the Summer Term. Good luck!

Stanford Connection

Robbie Sutton was flown out to California to give a talk at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Business on 28th February. The talk, entitled “How to lose friends and incense people: The art and science of group criticism”, was pitched as an ironic “self-help guide for people who are tired of being popular and want to escape the madding crowd by launching into criticisms of national, religious, political and demographic groups. The talk covered theory and research on group criticism by Robbie and his colleagues, and ended with a summary of the ways in which criticism of groups can be presented in ways that maximise, or minimise, damage to the critic’s own image. If you want to lose friends, adopt the “Seven Habits of Highly Rejected People” below:

1. When criticising your own group, avoid first-person pronouns, as in “We English are a nation of binge-drinkers”, and plump instead for third-person pronouns like “they” and “them”.

2. Criticise your own group in public, or at least where outgroupers can ‘hear’ you.

3. Better still, criticise a group to which you do not personally belong - this generally makes you even less popular.

4. Especially, opt for historically vulnerable, victimised groups.

5. Don’t sweeten your criticism of a group by pointing out its positive traits or behaviours - generally this seems to make you more popular.

6. But by all means do spotlight your criticism, by claiming to refer only to “some” group members - this does nothing to defuse sensitivity.

7. When criticising another group, don’t share the criticism by acknowledging that your group has similar flaws.

Robbie also led a seminar for PhD students at Stanford’s Business School and Psychology Department on the “justice motive” - the human need to see justice done, or at least to pretend that it has been done.

Marchel Duchamp (1914), courtesy of Mike Forrester.
Life as a Mature Student by Sara Alves, 3rd year

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?’

“The highlight of my journey has been: ‘learning with others and sharing what I already know with them’”.

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 then 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/uelt/); Students’ Union – SU (www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/sgwaz.htm#STUDENTSUNION); 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/sgwaz.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. I also keep thinking of a friend’s advice when I first started:

‘whatever you do...enjoy your time at university’.

I would like to thank all my colleagues/friends (with whom I studied and had coffee), as well as lecturers and staff members who provided me with the support I needed with which to succeed. So my advice for mature students (which indeed applies to all students) is to remember that you are not alone.

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!)

And most importantly, take coffee/tea breaks!

“It doesn’t matter how old you are, everyone is on the same level when they are studying. Everybody is here to learn. Age doesn’t matter if you want to fulfil a dream or improve yourself”.

Emma Peacock, 3rd year

“I felt trapped in a job I didn’t want to be doing and my future looked bleak. Becoming a student later than is usual was difficult, financially and socially, but I feel that now I have taken control of my life. It’s the best thing I have ever done...so far”.

Andrew Russ, 3rd year

“You are never too old to study”.

Riona Evenden, 3rd year
Success

Congratulations to Tim Hopthrow and Roberto Gutierrez who successfully defended their theses entitled “Social dilemmas, group discussion, group decision and demonstrability” and “Rational and emotional reactions to moral violations” respectively.

Psychology Society Needs You!

The Psychology Society is informal and open to all, providing an opportunity to discuss psychological issues. Throughout the year, the society has special guest speakers who discuss their area of expertise, some of whom speak from personal experience. The society meets once a fortnight on Tuesdays at 7.00 p.m. Details about meetings, including the venue, appear in the diary section of the society’s website (www.freewebs.com/psychologysociety). The society is looking for new volunteers to take on the responsibility of running the Psychology Society next year (2007/08).

Do you:

1. Want to get more involved in the Society and the Department of Psychology?
2. Have suggestions for improvements?
3. Want the opportunity to meet and socialise with other Psychology Society members and next year’s new students?

Well here is your chance!

The positions below will be available for next year’s committee, without you the society will not run!

Grant Success

Congratulations to Dr. Anat Bardi who is an author on a grant of £60,000 from the British Academy entitled “The Acculturation of Polish Immigrants into British Society: A multi-method investigation” The grant will be held at Brunel University with Robin Goodwin.

Anybody interested in joining the committee should email dt79@kent.ac.uk to put themselves forward for nomination, elections will be held in the last week of term (if necessary) or if you have any queries please go and speak to Danielle Tucker dt79@kent.ac.uk to put themselves forward for nomination, elections will be held in the last week of term (if necessary) or if you have any queries please go and speak to Danielle Tucker.

President’s role:
• Organisation: Organising meetings with guest speakers and documentaries requires researching
• Good time management: is essential to run a society around your degree and other commitments
• Passion for Psychology: you need to have a keen interest in the area but not necessarily have to be studying it as a degree
• Communication: Will have to communicate with guest speakers, University staff, Student Union, members and the committee via various media such as email and telephone
• Leadership: to be a President you must have confidence and interpersonal skills necessary to lead a committee. Keeping channels of communication with members and committee is also important
• Listen: be open to criticism. Improvements come from listening to advice and considering all ideas/suggestions put forward

• Termly report to the union
• Secretary’s role:
  • Admin paperwork
  • Collecting documentary videos
  • Organising refreshments
  • Advertising posters
  • Booking rooms

Treasurer’s role:
• dealing with member fees (now mostly done online by the union)
• paying cash to the Student Union (easy rules to learn)
• managing the budget
• organising money for expenses, e.g. refreshments and guest speakers
• liaise with Union (authorisation required for certain activities)

Provided that these three roles are filled we have the potential for 3 other committee positions:
• Vice President (assists the president in all their activities)
• Communications and Publicity (advertising, mailing lists, organising socials)
• Web designer

(Rule descriptions for these new roles are available upon request.) Email dt79@kent.ac.uk

Publications


Netherlands Link

Mark van Vugt has just finished his duty as a member of the accreditation committee for all Psychology undergraduate and Masters courses in the Netherlands. The accreditation exercise is just like the Quality Assurance we have in the U.K. A panel of experts comes in and visits each Psychology Department for two days and looks at all the available evidence concerning quality of UG teaching and provision.

Kent Psychologist

The Department of Psychology’s Newsletter 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 Lizanne.

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