Kent Psychologists Win Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise Award

On 5th March Dr Tim Hopthrow and Laura Spear won Kent Innovation and Enterprise’s Innovation Creativity and Enterprise Award. The University of Kent’s Vice Chancellor Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow presented the award (pictured below) at a ceremony attended by staff, students and outside companies and the audience included the Lord Mayor of Canterbury. The award sounds like the start of a tongue twister. It is though a highlight for the School, and awarded in response to the strong and innovative relationship that the School of Psychology and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has forged over the last 3 years. Dstl is tasked with maximising the impact of science and technology on UK defence and security. Psychology and human interaction research and implementation are key parts of the work Dstl does.

The relationship between Dstl and the School of Psychology has resulted in new avenues of research with the school receiving funding from Dstl to undertake specific pieces of research. It has also created opportunities for students to get involved – for example, in employability events. Laura from Dstl is currently studying part time for a PhD in Psychology here in the School examining the issues around understanding and mapping people’s social identities. She has professional training in occupational psychology, and has contributed to teaching in applied and occupational psychology in the School. She has held one-on-one consultations with students about careers in occupational psychology and has led a taster session on the type of work psychologists perform at Dstl. One of Psychology’s students has also won a competitive place for a salaried one-year placement at Dstl, which is a real reflection of the strength of Kent Psychology’s applied degree programme and the quality and dedication of our students - great work Luiza!

As well as all this one of our PhD students, Amy Murphy has been seconded full time into Dstl. She has been able to use her training in social and applied psychology, research methods and statistics gained at Kent to really good use in Dstl and is a very valued part of the Dstl team, where she has now gained full time employment. Amy was shortlisted in the Early Career category of the Kent Innovation and Enterprise awards, congratulations Amy!

Dr Tim Hopthrow (pictured below with Laura Spear and, Director of Innovation and Enterprise, Carole Barron) says that the relationship with Dstl ‘has taken a lot of commitment to set up but with the support of KIE and the School of Psychology it has become a key part of Psychology’s research and engagement strategy. The sharing of knowledge, and the diversity of approaches has strengthened both partners and we look forward to further collaborations and successes.’

To find out more about the awards please see: bit.ly/1j6W0Ko.

Dr David Wilkinson Appointed as Director of NIHR’s Research Design Service South East

The School of Psychology has strengthened its relationship with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) following the appointment of Dr David Wilkinson as the new Director of NIHR’s Research Design Service (RDS) South East.

David, who is a Reader in Psychology, will lead the RDS (SE) in its role in preparing research proposals for submission to peer-reviewed funding programmes in applied health and social care. He will also oversee the strategic development of the service across the dozens of staff employed, and it will be in his remit to ensure that the Service is performing as best it can. At the national level, he will represent the service with a view to maximising the funds allocated to clinical and health/social care research in the South East, and to inform national guidelines/policy on allied funding matters.

Additionally, David is also an Academic Research Fellow at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust. His main research interest is in understanding the psychological and biological bases of human cognition with a view to developing more effective therapies for individuals with brain injury. His research uses a variety of experimental approaches including normative behavioural testing, cognitive neuropsychology, brain stimulation, and functional neuro-imaging. This research informs the teaching in final year module SP611 The Neuroscience of Cognitive Disorders.

David had this to say about the appointment: ‘I want to thank Professor Hall for her significant contribution to the RDS. The service plays a key role in developing research that will benefit patients and members of the general public, and I look forward to helping guide its activities here in the South East of England’.

To find out more about David’s research, please see his staff page: www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/people/wilkinsond/.
Postgraduate Study - What can you expect from us?

Dr Heather Ferguson says ‘The MSc in Cognitive Psychology/Neuropsychology is an exciting programme that covers the most up-to-date theories and practice in the field, and considers how this knowledge can be applied in a diverse range of settings including patient rehabilitation, treatment for addictions, and forensic analysis.’

Dr David Williams says ‘The MSc Developmental Psychology degree offers students a unique opportunity to learn about advanced theoretical and practical issues in the study of developmental psychology and treatment of developmental psychopathology. Through lectures, small-group seminars and practicals, students are taught about up-to-date theory and research in the field. Moreover, as part of a ‘Developmental Psychology in Professional Practice’ module, students learn directly from practitioners about the contribution of this theory and research to the work of clinicians.’

Dr Jane Wood says ‘The Forensic MSc at Kent offers students an opportunity to complete their first year of training towards becoming a Chartered Forensic Psychologist with the BPS and being registered as a Forensic Psychologist with the HCPC. The MSc at Kent provides broad-based training in Forensic Psychology based on cutting-edge research that is being conducted by Kent researchers in high profile areas of forensic importance.’

Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura says ‘The MSc in Social and Applied Psychology provides advanced training and skills for students interested in how social interaction impacts our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours. The range of modules allows students to gain experience and expertise of putting psychological knowledge into practice. Previous students have researched far ranging questions including how psychology can help business increase employee engagement, how power affects financial risk taking, and what impact leadership has in the tackling of racism in sports. The MSc in Group Processes and Intergroup Relations allows for dedicated specialism to our understanding of how group and intergroup processes uniquely impact on human behaviour and the interaction between groups, for example, the impact of group leaders on members and vice versa, reduction of prejudice, and how to increase cooperation within and between groups. In addition, the School offers a MSc Research Methods - this is ideal for students who want to enhance their research methods training whilst maintaining flexibility in potential subject interests as option modules can be selected from a range of programmes.’

Psychology Society Host Makaton Sign Language Course

On 15th and 16th February 2014, the Psychology Society held a Makaton Sign Language Foundation Course which consisted of a total of 50 Students from the University. The course took place in Keynes from 9am – 4pm on both days. Students were charged a reduced price of only £20. The Makaton Tutors who run the course were from The Makaton Charity, Ann Cardinal and Sarah Wheeler. On both of these days, students were split into two groups of 25 alongside one of the Trainers.

The day consisted of learning theoretical aspects of Makaton such as the Multi-Modal approach which included communicating through speech, symbols and signing. We also learnt about the relationship between signing and speech development in the brain. One of the things which most students found interesting was that signing does not in fact hinder or replace speech development, as one might think, but rather it improves its functioning because the two areas are neurologically close.

We then had practical sessions where we learnt how to sign some key words such as

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What is TMS?

Following the installation of the brand new TMS/EEG facilities in the School of Psychology (pictured on page 4), Dr Joseph Brooks answers some questions about what TMS can offer our students:

(1) What is TMS?

TMS stands for Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation. TMS is a form of brain stimulation which uses magnetic pulses to alter the activity of the brain. This can be done non-invasively and safely in healthy human participants. TMS helps us to understand how the activity of the brain causes behaviour and also provides a new method for treating some disorders such as depression.

(2) What kinds of studies can be run with TMS?

TMS has been used to disrupt cognitive functions temporarily to understand the role that different brain areas play in cognition. For instance, by stimulating brain areas related to recognizing faces, TMS can temporarily impair aspects of face recognition. This impairment disappears when the TMS is stopped. Other types of TMS can actually enhance function or change the way that a person perceives an object. By using TMS to stimulate a brain area and then observing a behaviour at the same time, you can establish whether that behaviour depends on that brain area.

(3) What are the limitations of TMS?

TMS can only be used on the brain areas that lie just underneath the scalp. Deep areas such as the thalamus and cortical areas on the inferior surface of the brain are not accessible and their functions cannot be studied with TMS. Also, TMS cannot be performed on anyone that has a history of seizures or other neurological disorders as this can pose risks.

(4) Why use TMS instead of EEG or FMRI?

FMRI and EEG tell us how brain activity CORRELATES with behaviour. But correlation does NOT equal causation. If we want to know how brain activity CAUSES behaviour then we need to experimentally manipulate brain activity and observe the consequences on behaviour. TMS allows us to do this. We can even use TMS during EEG or FMRI and observe the precise ways in which we change brain activity.

(5) Does TMS hurt?

No, usually it doesn’t hurt. A participant will usually feel a light tap on their head where the stimulation is done. If, however, the coil is placed near to neck or facial muscles this can cause some movement of those muscles and that sometimes hurts a bit. But, we always try to provide a dose of TMS that minimizes any pain.
Recent Publications


Congratulations

Congratulations to Theresa Gannon who has been awarded £4,202 by the Faculty Research Fund for a project entitled “Extending the Evaluation and Impact of a Firesetting Treatment Programme for Mentally Disordered Offenders”.

Congratulations to Jane Wood who has been awarded £4,210 from the Faculty Research Fund for a project entitled “Gang membership: a mental health perspective”.

Congratulations to Markus Bindemann, Heather Ferguson and Casper Turnerham who have been awarded £2,390 by the Faculty of Social Sciences’ Internationalisation Fund. The funds will enable attendance at two UG and PG recruitment fairs in Norway – Stavanger and Bergen.

Congratulations to Rachel Calogero who has been awarded £1,000 from the School’s Seed Fund. Her application was entitled, ‘Building the Weight Stigma Network’, and the amount will help subsidise the cost of her Weight Stigma conference in May here at UoL.

Congratulations to Ruth Lamont who has been awarded an internship with the Social Action Team, Government Innovation Group, in the Cabinet Office. The internship is for 6 months and Ruth will work alongside others in the Centre for Social Action, to support high impact social action initiatives.

Congratulations to Libby Cuthbert who has been awarded an internship with the Behavioural Insights Team, Department for Business Innovation and Skills at Whitehall in London. The internship is for 6 months on a project entitled “Women on Boards”, a project to establish role models of women who currently sit on boards.

Congratulations to Karen Douglas on her co-editorship of the British Journal of Social Psychology with Nick Hopkins (Dundee). Furthermore Karen’s paper (Wood & Douglas, 2013, Frontiers in Psychology) was the most viewed paper in the journal last year with 26,000 views.


Congratulations to Abi Player who has been elected to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) STEM Steering Group as the postgraduate representative. The HEA’s

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Kent Psychologists in the Media

Research conducted by Dr Annemieke Van den Tol and Professor Jane Edwards (University of Limerick) on the effects of sad music on people’s moods has received a lot of media coverage. The Mail Online, The Daily Telegraph, Huffington Post Canada (blog), Malay Mail (web), and News Track India (web) were among some of the media outlets responding to the research titled ‘Listening to sad music in adverse situations: How music selection strategies relate to self-regulatory goals, listening effects and mood enhancement’. Annemieke said this about the study: ‘We found in our research that people’s music choice is linked to the individual’s own expectations for listening to music and its effects on them...The only selection strategy that was found to directly predict mood enhancement was where the music was perceived by the listener to have high aesthetic value’.

There have also been media mentions this month concerning new research conducted by Daniel Jolley and Dr Karen Douglas on anti-vaccine conspiracy theories and the possible detrimental consequences for children’s health. Health Canal (web), EurekAlert! (web), Medical Xpress (web), Science Codex (blog), BioPortfolio (web) and Science Daily (web) have made reference to the conclusion of the journal article titled ‘The effects of anti-vaccine conspiracy theories on vaccination intentions’. Read the paper here: bit.ly/1gVC1Mz.

Dr Caolite Ó Ciardha recently appeared in two episodes of Eágór on the Irish language television channel TG4 providing expert opinion on infamous cases of injustice. Watch episodes 1 and 4 here: bit.ly/1kLQ1bj.

Student Publications

Kent Psychology graduate Ben Brandrett had his first article published this January. The article, titled ‘Shame, self-acceptance and disclosure in the lives of gay men living with HIV: An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach’ was published in the Psychology & Health. Ben told us that without the teachings on qualitative research methods he learned at Kent, he would not have been able to contribute to the project. Well done Ben!

Furthermore, alumnus Kelly Matthews has coauthored an in press paper for the Journal of Individual Differences. The article titled ‘Perfectionism and negative affect after repeated failure: Anxiety, depression, and anger’ was written in collaboration with Professor Joachim Stoeber, Head of the School of Psychology.

PhD student Nichola Tyler’s recent article, ‘A Firesetting Offense Chain for Mentally Disorder Offenders’, in the journal Criminal Justice and Behavior was featured in Kent Forensic Psychiatry Service’s ‘Peak of the Week’ circulated to staff within NHS.

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kentpsychologist
BPS Social Psychology Section
Postgraduate Conference April 2014

The University of Kent’s School of Psychology is holding the BPS Social Psychology Section Postgraduate Conference in April 2014.

The event will house an array of oral presentations, which will allow postgraduates to present to a supportive audience of likeminded social psychologists. There will also be plenty of time for networking and idea sharing as well as keynote addresses from Dr Martin Edwards (King’s College London) and Dr Hanna Zagefka (Royal Holloway).

Information about the event can be found at www.socialpsychologyuk.net/postgraduate_conference or you can contact the conference organising committee on pgspconf@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Society Makaton Course Continued

family members e.g. mum and dad, working our way from stage 1 onwards. We then developed our vocab lists by learning the symbols for words such as ‘went’ and ‘love’. The students practiced these with a partner and then in large groups. The tutors also read some sentences out loud which we had to communicate to another using Sign Language. We then created our own sentences using signs and then others had to guess the sentences which we were trying to create.

On the second day, we learnt more about the physical symbols used in Sign Language (see image below). After seeing the symbols, we then had to create our own sentences drawing out the symbols. We also had practice using a communication device ‘my choice pad’. During the sessions, we also signed and sang along to some nursery rhymes such as ‘Goldilocks and the Three Bears’ and ‘Old McDonald had a Farm’.

Overall, it was a great way to spend the weekend, productive and fun! Everyone was so enthusiastic with constant questions for the tutors. Students were awarded with a Foundation Level Certificate in Makaton training which can be used in a professional setting. The feedback from students who attended the training was very positive and most people requested further training which we will be looking into.

Thanks, Bernice Anum
(President of Psychology Society)

Experimental Psychology Research Workshop
April 2014

On 14th April, the School of Psychology will host the Experimental Psychology research workshop: Best practice in EEG and TMS research. The aims of the one-day event which precedes the Experimental Psychology Society Spring meeting, also to be held at Kent, are to bring together EEG and TMS experts to train researchers who are new to these techniques; to discuss advanced topics within their area; and to build a bridge between stimulation and EEG recording.

The local organisers of this one-day event, Dr Joseph Brooks, Dr Heather Ferguson and Dr Zara Bergström have devised two parallel streams for the day. One ‘introductory’ stream for researchers with no or very little previous experience including practical demonstrations and research ‘clinics’ where delegates can discuss their own EEG/TMS research ideas.

The second ‘advanced’ stream will involve talks by invited speakers from other institutions who are leading experts in their fields. The focus will be on recent advances in cutting-edge techniques, and will place particular emphasis on good methodological practice in experimental design, data analysis and publication of findings.

Dr Heather Ferguson said this about the upcoming event ‘We’re looking forward to welcoming leading experts in EEG and TMS and also to showcasing our facilities to experimental psychologists’.

Need Help/Advice?
If you have any personal or academic issues that may affect your ability to study you can talk to Lisa Clark, Student Advisor for Psychology.

Please email her at: psychadvisor@kent.ac.uk

There are a range of services available to all Kent students including the following:
• Careers and Employability Service
• Disability and Dyslexia Support Service
• International Students
• Counselling
• Chaplaincy
• Medical

Plus many more...

You can find more out about Student Services from the following webpage: www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/

Any Suggestions?
If you have any comments or suggestions for the staff in the School of Psychology, then you can feed these back to us by using our suggestions box located outside the Psychology Student Office (Keynes M1.13).

Kent Psychologist

The School 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 Carly Turnham.

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