Psychology at Kent among best in UK for Research Excellence

It’s a great time to be a Kent Psychologist!

Rankings published in Times Higher Education show that research conducted by academic staff in the School of Psychology at the University of Kent is ranked 11th /82 in the UK. This is based on Research Intensity calculated in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF). Psychology at the University of Kent is placed between Cambridge and Oxford, and also above many Russell Group universities such as Warwick, York, Durham, Exeter, and Cardiff, and neighbouring universities such as Sussex, Surrey, and Essex. 100% of the School’s research impact was classified as having outstanding or very considerable reach and significance.

The research intensity ranking reflects the high levels of research activity as 95% of academic staff provided outputs that were evaluated, showing the School’s commitment to maintaining strongly integrated research and teaching, and to conducting research that has practical importance. The School’s diverse academic community members are supported to participate fully in teaching, research, enterprise, and engagement with external organizations and individuals. This gives our students a dynamic and vibrant experience in which they have the chance to be taught and supervised by international leaders in a range of areas of psychology.

Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura, Head of School, commented on the excellent REF research intensity ranking, saying that: “All members of the School are very proud of our collective achievements. The REF provides independent confirmation of our research excellence, and the high proportion of staff who contributed reflects the value we place on research and research-led teaching”.

Welcome to our world: Our experience of psychologically informed support of life writing for people living with Dementia

Dementia is a neurodegenerative condition associated with gradual loss of cognitive function, which often includes short term memory. In clinical practice, reminiscence has been shown to be an effective way of working therapeutically with people living with the condition (Guss et al., 2014).

During our applied year on placement with Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT), we worked with a group of people living with dementia. Keith Oliver, diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s disease, invited us to play a vital role in a unique life writing project, led by a local professional writer. This involved a small group of people with dementia, who would embark upon a six week interaction with large maps, in which writers and students annotated the maps with memories of places they had been.

Our role in this project was to support the writing sessions, both on a group and a one-to-one basis. We provided encouragement, validation, and person-centred working, offering tailored support to meet individual needs. Typically, this involved transcribing or taking dictation, using creative methods to elicit memories, and later in the process, editorial suggestions. Each session was based around a theme which informed activities. For example, the session titled ‘The World I’ve Seen’ involved interaction with large maps, in which writers and students annotated the maps with memories of places they had been.

As the project progressed towards publication of the book, one-to-one work between writer and student became pivotal. As we developed these person-centred relationships, the building of rapport and trust enabled writers to take risks in their writing, and to tell us stories that had never before been told. An understanding of dementia from neuropsychological and behavioural perspectives broadened our capacity for empathy and sensitivity when working with these writers, which in turn informed the support that we provided. When confronted with challenges presented by the nature of dementia, we were able to respond with flexibility and understanding. Not only did the writers benefit from this process, but we also found it to be an enriching experience, both academically and personally. We were not simply learning about their lives but about our own, gaining an intergenerational perspective on the challenges that life presents. It shifted our attitudes around ageing, and away from the traditional narrative of dementia. Whilst dementia is often portrayed as a story of loss, these writers demonstrated the ability to gain new skills and experiences.

We have gained a greater understanding of the tragedies, comedies, the loves and the losses that make up the tapestry of human experience, and have done so from people with lived experience, rather than from the textbook or lecture theatre. It was a privilege to be welcomed into the worlds of such inspirational people, determined to not allow dementia to dictate their lives, and to be trusted with their life stories.

Authors: Alexandra Bone, Charlotte Massingham, Sophie Razzell, Jennifer Russell & Lewis Slade (final year Applied Psychology undergraduate students)


Introducing Anamaria and Nichola

In February, the School of Psychology welcomed Anamaria Buescu as EDI Project Officer. Anamaria will be in post for the next two years and is working on a University-wide project funded by OFFFA.

I have a background in Linguistics and Semiotics (Pragmatics), Conference Interpreting, and Cultural Studies, all of which meet my interest in social language and its psychological and anthropological implications. I have looked at the ways in which discourse may cause power struggles between those holding conflicting attitudes across and between different cultures, thus exposing the embedded ideological ramifications of language. I have explored Race and Ethnicity, Identity and Identification, Power and Identity Politics, with a particular focus on Masculinities and gendered discourse.

My latest research focuses on Masculinity in Crisis through a study of authorship and the impact of the writer’s block on the demise of Hegemonic Masculinity. In my current role as an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity Project Officer, I conduct research on key matters underlying the academic performance of Psychology undergrads from different ethnic backgrounds, in the aim of designing inclusive strategies to improve overall satisfaction of all students. Specifically, I look at variables such as ethnicity, gender, residence and expectations, to assess their impact on attainment, attendance and retention. Part of my role is sharing practices with other EDI Officers working towards addressing the existing gap in attainment across different ethnic groups. Drawing on my expertise in Communications and Cultural Studies, I am also interested in raising awareness of and promoting Multicultural Competence, with the aim of enhancing Intercultural Communication at all levels (staff and students).

Nichola Tyler joined the School of Psychology as a Postdoctoral Research Associate last year.

I completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology and Law, MSc in Forensic Psychology and PhD at Kent. I completed my PhD in December 2014 and my research focused on the offence process, treatment needs, and effectiveness of specialist treatment for mentally disordered firesetters.

I am now a Postdoctoral Research Associate jointly employed by the University of Kent and Kent Forensic Psychiatry Services (Kent & Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust). Within this role I am the lead coordinator for the evaluation project associated with the Firesetting Intervention Programme for Mentally Disordered Offenders (FIP-MO). The FIP-MO is the first standardised treatment programme for male and female mentally disordered firesetters and is currently being run nationally across the UK within private hospitals and the NHS. The associated evaluation seeks to examine (1) whether the FIP-MO is effective in reducing firesetters key deficits pre-post treatment and (2) whether it is effective when compared to a control group of firesetters receiving treatment as usual (i.e., not receiving the FIP-MO).
What’s On

Professor Joachim Stoebjer’s Inaugural Lecture on Thursday 19 March at 6pm in Keynes College Lecture Theatre 4.

On behalf of Professor Joachim Stoebjer, we are pleased to invite you to attend his Inaugural Lecture, to celebrate his promotion to Professor. The title of the talk is: “Perfectionism: A double-edged sword” and it will be followed by a drinks reception at 7pm.

To find out more about Joachim’s research, please go to: www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/people/stoebjerj.

Professor Dominic Abrams Esteem Lecture on Wednesday 25 March at 6pm in Grimond Lecture Theatre 1.

As part of the series of Esteem Lectures announced by the University of Kent for its 50th anniversary year Professor Dominic Abrams, Director of the School of Psychology’s internationally esteemed Centre for the Study of Group Processes, will give a lecture entitled “The Pride and Prejudice of Leaders and their Groups: Social Competition, Social Control and Tests of Tolerance”.

A ten-week Forensic Psychology Evening Course started earlier this month.

There’s still time to book your place on the course which is taught by some of the UK’s leading forensic psychology experts. To register, go to: http://bit.ly/1NJfJSA.

Members of the University’s Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology (CORE-FP) will highlight famous cases, such as that of Jack the Ripper, to present an insight into murder and profiling, while other parts of the course will put the spotlight on juries, stalking and harassment, sex offenders and rehabilitation, and the reliability of eyewitnesses.

Practitioners, students and academics can now book their place on two new training courses with CORE-FP on HCR-20 Version 3 and RSVP (Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol).

The HCR-20 Version 3 course will run on Wednesday 25 March, 9am-5pm in Keynes College. Attendees will learn about best practices using the HCR-20 set of guidelines for comprehensive violence risk assessment and management based on the Structured Professional Judgement (SPJ) model.

Book online: www.kent.ac.uk/enterprise/training/hcr20-mar15.html.

The RSVP (Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol) course will take place on

Wednesday 22 April, 9am-5pm in Keynes College. The course will cover the administration of RSVP, the structured professional judgement risk assessment instrument which provides evaluators with guidance on assessing risk and developing risk plans to prevent sexual violence.

Book online: www.kent.ac.uk/enterprise/training/rsvp-apr15.html

More Research Seminars will take place this term in Keynes Lecture Theatre 4.

All University staff, final year undergraduate and postgraduate students are welcome to attend. Refreshments are provided. We have the following Research Seminars to look forward to:

2 April - “Intuitive morality judgments and... Continued on page 4

Safety of the Net: Kent’s ‘CyberSmart’ Day

Final year student Holly Summers tells us about her involvement in an event which highlights social science in society.

Bullying in schools has been a problem since... well schools really. But what happens when the bullies are not just at school, but on the bus, in your bag and on your desk in your bedroom at home? This is reality of Cyberbullying, where bullies can contact their victims any place, anytime. Cyberbullying is an ever-growing problem for young people growing up in The Internet Age and the issues range from smutty texts to snide tweets and from scary Trolls to exploitive photos and videos gone viral. Cyberbullying has a major impact on the safety of children and can have detrimental effects to their mental health.

At the beginning of November, the School of Psychology at the University of Kent hosted an event for children from local secondary schools in order to raise awareness about Cyberbullying, as part of the ESRC funded Festival of Social Science. The event was organised by Dr Lindsey Cameron, a child development specialist at the University’s School of Psychology.

Around 60 year eight pupils from schools in Kent came to campus and were guided in small groups by student ambassadors, to different bases on campus. There they had the opportunity to try out cutting edge technology including Google Glass, a 3D Scanner and Oculus Rift and to have a think about how these might be used for the good, the bad and the downright ugly. They also tried out the School’s emotion face-reading software, eye-tracking systems and participated in a simulated online chatroom. All the pupils completed a workbook of ‘Lab Notes’, which asked questions about how they thought the tech they had sampled could be improved, used and abused. Each small group had at least one student ambassador to help with their lab notes and answer their questions about university life.

After lunch, the groups came together to share their ideas and participate in a workshop about staying safe online, run by a representative from Project Salus (formerly Kent Safe Schools). Project Salus is a non-profit organisation which provides talks to pupils, teachers and parents about the facts on Cyberbullying and bust the myths of the internet to help children stay safe while surfing the web. The workshop included activities and interactive quizzes which allowed the pupils to show what they had learned in the morning session and ask questions about cyberbullying and online safety.

The final activity which the pupils participated in was designing and presenting an idea for a smartphone app, which could be used to help stop cyberbullying. There were loads of great ideas and creative designs which the groups all shared with one another.

The day provided pupils with the opportunity to try out loads of cool new technology, think about what cyberbullying is and reflect on their own experiences and future actions online, as well as have a look around the Canterbury campus and see the kind of research done here at Kent.

Further information about the services provided by The Salus Project is available at: www.projectsalus.co.uk/.

Pictured above are some of the staff and students who helped to make the event a great success.

kentpsychologist
Employability in the First Degree

PhD Student Lynsey Mahmood researches students’ perceptions of their own employability.

A common worry for undergraduate students is finding employment after their degree finishes. Once they have gained the degree and all of the transferrable skills, the graduate’s perspective on employability would not only help researchers to understand why this disparity exists, but would also inform career advisors, personal tutors and other professionals in an advisory role. This would allow sufficient support to be given in place and tailored to the students who will soon be entering the graduate job market.

Our article presents research aiming to fill this gap in our understanding of graduate employability by asking work placement students about their perceptions of skills gained and employability developments throughout their degree. We hope that this will start to inform higher education research as to the student perspective on these issues and bridge the gap between what employers want and what graduates can offer.


This research commenced during Lynsey’s placement year on her Applied Psychology BSc at Kent. During this time Lynsey also helped to develop an employability website: www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/employability/

Play and Learn Outreach Event

In November, a team of psychologists from Psychology ran a very successful Play and Learn event in Chartham, Canterbury. This event was funded in part by the Economic and Social Research Council (to Dr Lindsey Cameron) and in part from the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation (to Drs Lindsey Cameron, Kirsten Abbot-Smith, and Erika Nurmsoo).

The event was an opportunity for families to enjoy free refreshments and soft-play, whilst learning about child development. Students and staff ran six information stands, each showcasing various aspects of child development. Parents and children also had the chance to participate in current research and use the Eye-Tracker to see first-hand how we conduct research, and of course to ask questions about their child’s development.

The feedback received from parents was unanimously positive, with many asking us to provide more such events. Families in attendance had travelled from as far away as Margate, Ramsgate, and Ashford.

Around twenty dedicated Master’s, final year project, and Research Experience Scheme students assisted with staffing the stands and talking to parents. They did a wonderful job of demonstrating Developmental Psychology to parents and to the children. Special thanks to all who attended and supported the event.

We hope to run many more of these events in the future and that parents and child care providers will continue to engage with our exciting research!

ASI-WAS Undergrad Prize Winner

MSc student Charlotte Parfitt tells us how she came to win The Animals and Society Institute (ASI) and Wesleyan Animal Studies (WAS) Annual Prize.

Following three years of hard work I had finally finished my degree, along with my final year research project. Myself and my supervisor, Dr Emma Alleyne, were extremely pleased with the outcome of my research and began our search for potential journals to publish my paper. Last year, we came across The Animals and Society Institute and Wesleyan Animal Studies undergraduate paper prize in human-animal studies, which seemed like a great opportunity to try and get my paper published. Each year they offer a prize to outstanding, original theoretical or empirical scholarly work that advances the field of human-animal studies.

My research examined the psychological and behavioural characteristics of adulthood animal abusers; which is a much neglected area of research. Animal abuse literature is significantly focused on young offenders, therefore findings are often applied to adult populations. As a result of this, there is very little research which looks directly at adults who abuse animals and the factors which are associated with this type of offending behaviour. In my research I looked at community adults’ likelihood or proclivity to engage in animal abuse and the factors that could be used to predict this behaviour. I found that childhood animal abuse, empathetic concern (i.e., sympathy), proneness for human-direct aggression and personal distress (i.e., low moods or discomfort as a result of becoming too deeply involved in other’s pain), were all significant factors in predicting animal abuse in adults. Based upon these findings, my research highlights areas that should be targeted in prevention and intervention programmes aimed at reducing animal abuse. It also highlights the importance of distinguishing between different forms of, and motivations for, animal abuse.

Much to my surprise, towards the end of November, they announced my research paper “‘Taking it out on the dog’: Psychological and behavioural correlates of animal abuse proclivity”, as the winning paper. As part of my winning, my paper is due to be published in the Society & Animals Journal and I will receive a book of my choice from ASI’s Human-Animal Studies book series published by Brill. I would recommend this competition to future undergraduates who are carrying out their research in the field of human-animal studies as it is a great way to get your research out there!

To find out more about the ASI-WAS prize including how to apply and past winners like Charlotte, go to: http://bit.ly/1HJUeY2.

What’s On Continued

Universidad Carlos III Madrid.

Even more Academic and Professional Development Workshops will run this term 12-2pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Keynes Seminar Room 9.

Plus don’t forget about the regular Café Psychology talks; these events are a chance for Psychology staff and students to talk animatedly about a subject they are passionate about.

...moral stereotypes of scientists” with Dr Bastiaan Rutjens, University of Amsterdam.

9 April - “Do We Want a Fighter? The Influence of Group Status and the Stability of Intergroup Relations on Leader Prototypically and Endorsement” with Dr Ilka Gleibs, London School of Economics.

TBA - “Hostility Involving Interacting Groups” with Prof Verlin B Hinz, North Dakota State University &
A summary of recent publications and congratulations to various researchers and students:

**Recent Publications**


**Congratulations**

- Congratulations to Prof Theresa Gannon, Dr Emma Alleyne, Dr Caoilte O’Ciardha, Dr Lona Lockerbie (Honorary Lecturer), Nichola Tyler, Helen Butler, Magali Barnoux and Katarina Mozova for being awarded the Faculty of Social Sciences Research Prize for their work on ‘Understanding and Treating Deliberate Firesetters’.

- Congratulations to Dr Giovanni Travaglino for being awarded the University Prize for Postgraduate Research for his work on “Honour, Masculinity, and Criminal Organisations: The Psychology of Omertà”.

- Congratulations to Dr Kristof Dhont and Prof Arne Roets (Ghent University, Belgium) who have been awarded £12,000 by the Experimental Psychology Society for a project entitled “Using experiments to determine trust and legitimation beliefs”, and is a collaboration of the studentship is:- ‘Neuropsychological outcomes in military veterans with traumatic brain injury’ and the terms and conditions of funding are the same as that for an RCUK studentship. Congratulations also go to final year student Emma Denby who has been offered the studentship.

- Congratulations to Dr David Williams on being made an Associate Editor at *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*.

- Congratulations to Dr Giovanni Travaglino, Dr Maria Ridda (School of English, University of Kent) and Benjamin Abrams (Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge) who have been awarded £4,000 by ISPP as a contribution towards a symposium on collective action, change, and resistance in Southern Italy. The meeting will address ‘Italy’s Southern Question’, whilst creating an opportunity for cross-disciplinary exchange among political psychologists, historians, and sociologists. The meeting is part of the INSPR’s ([www.inspr.eu](http://www.inspr.eu)) series of interdisciplinary events on collective action.

- Congratulations to Prof Dominic Abrams (PI) and Dr Hannah Swift (Co-I) who have been awarded £5,000 by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills for an RCUK studentship from KentHealth (www.kent.ac.uk/health/funding/). This is the 5th year that the scheme has run and the first time that Psychology has won. The title of the studentship is: ‘Neuropsychological outcomes in military veterans with traumatic brain injury’ and the terms and conditions of funding are the same as that for an RCUK studentship. Congratulations also go to final year student Emma Denby who has been offered the studentship.

- Congratulations to Drs Maria Ridda and Ben Seyd from the School of Politics and International Relations, between Aleksandra and Ben Seyd from the School of Politics and International Relations, which they have initiated as part of the Legitimation Lab, which is a collaboration of the studentship is:- ‘Neuropsychological outcomes in military veterans with traumatic brain injury’ and the terms and conditions of funding are the same as that for an RCUK studentship. Congratulations also go to final year student Emma Denby who has been offered the studentship.

- Congratulations to PhD student Benny Ogidan who has been awarded £1,950 by the Experimental Psychology Society under the EPS Study Visit Scheme. This has enabled Benny to visit Dr Hayley Ness in Edinburgh where he was trained to use featurally-based facial composite systems.
Student Experience Forum

Undergraduate students in the School are invited to attend the new Student Experience Forum. This forum offers an opportunity to meet senior members of the School, to hear about new initiatives, and to hear what students feel is important for the student experience. It is due to take place on 25 March at 1-2pm in the Psychology Conference Room. Refreshments will be provided.

If you are interested in attending the Forum or you would like to find out more, please email Dr Caoilte Ó Ciardha at C.C.OCiardha@kent.ac.uk.

Student-led Psychology Café London Event

Psychology Café is a new monthly event launched by Assistant Psychologist, Aska Matsunaga, in the hopes of creating an open forum for discussion and bridging the gap between students and professionals in clinical psychology.

It is an event for collaboration and to help attendees gain helpful insight directly to both the career pathway and reflections of practice from those currently going through the process.

Although it is in the early stages, the first event went down well with representatives from the University of Kent, Regents University, and assistants and trainee psychologists from the CNWL NHS Foundation Trust. This event is open also to students from UCL and UWL, again allowing for a broader network to emerge amongst clinical psychologists and enthusiastic students.

In our January event, we discussed how to access clinical psychology as a career with students realizing just how accessible it is and how many different routes there are to get into the field. Additionally, the differences in the role psychology can play for a range of clinical conditions was discussed with great debate, as each psychologist begins to identify their own method and approach throughout their career.

Our next meetings will take place on the 27 March and 24 April (5.30-8pm) at the Timberyard Seven Dials Café (7 Upper St Martin’s Lane, Seven Dials, London, WC2H 9DL). If you would like to attend or have any queries, please contact Aska Matsunaga on aska.matsunaga@nhs.net. You can also keep up-to-date with meetings via Facebook: www.facebook.com/psychologycafelondon.

Final Year Memento

As in previous years, the School of Psychology will be giving free mugs to its final year students on deadline day for receipt of projects. Look out for communications from your year group representatives about suggestions for slogans to appear on the memento mug for 2015!

Congratulations Continued

Congratulations to Dr Ayse Uskul on being invited to act as a member of the British Council Research Links and Institutional Links (Social Sciences) funding panel.

Congratulations to Dr Anna Brown who has been awarded £2,760 by Imagini Holdings Limited for a project entitled “Investigation of psychometric properties of a visual forced-choice stimuli”.

Congratulations to Dr Kirsten Abbot-Smith (PI) and Dr David Williams (Co-I) who have been awarded £4,986 by the Faculty Research Fund for a project entitled “The role of social shared experience in how children interpret linguistic requests”.

Congratulations to Drs Heather Ferguson and David Williams who have been awarded a grant by the Leverhulme Trust for £225,482. The project will start in September 2015 and the title is “Imagining the self in fictional worlds: Evidence from Autism Spectrum Disorder”.

Congratulations to final year undergraduate student Fatima Tresh who was awarded £50 from the BPS London and Home Counties branch for a poster titled “Women in the workplace: is the unconscious bias holding them back?”.

Congratulations to Dr Joe Brooks who has been awarded £3,500 by the Experimental Psychology Society for a project entitled “Workshop in honour of Professor Jon Driver and his influence in mentoring others”.

Congratulations to Dr Hannah Swift who has been awarded £7,913 by The Learning through Landscapes Trust for a project entitled “Grounds for Discovery”. Hannah is the PI on this grant and Ann Marie Towers is the Co-I and a Research Fellow in PSSRU.

Kent Psychologists in the Media

Julie Van de Vyver, a PhD researcher in the School of Psychology, wrote a research article for People United’s website. To read “An Unlikely Pair? Anger and Kindness”, please go to: http://bit.ly/1aZIV2U.

Research carried out by Dr Rachel Calogero was highlighted by The Washington Post online in October in an article titled “What do fir women want? Strong or skinny?” (http://wapo.st/1CmimeO).

Last year PhD student Angelique Eydam was interviewed for an article titled ‘Talk to your baby: they might understand’ by Horizon: The EU Research & Innovation Magazine online (http://bit.ly/1E8HeK6).

Ageism affects how well old people feel

Prof Dominic Abrams and Dr Hannah Swift’s research as part of the Eurage was included in Autumn 2014 edition of Society Now which is the regular magazine published by the ESRC. The article titled ‘Ageism affects how well older people feel’ is available here: http://bit.ly/1fD9Bg9.

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 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, students and alumni 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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