The National Student Survey 2012 Results Are In!

In September, the School of Psychology received confirmation that its National Student Survey 2012 ranking had gone up by 27 places since 2011 to 11th position in 2012 across all Psychology departments in the UK for overall satisfaction!

This excellent result, which came from surveying our final year students, showed that satisfaction with the quality of the course had risen by 4% from last year to a score of 93%! Likewise, Psychology at Kent is also highly rated for satisfaction with the Students’ Union, the organisation and smooth-running of the course, the effective communication from the department, and access to IT resources. Other areas of improvement include promptness of feedback, course content and quality of comments on work. Student opinion is vital to the success of the School and we endeavour to continue to listen to your views so that we maintain the high standard of academic excellence and student experience Psychology at Kent has to offer.

The NSS is a significant measure of academic esteem which has a great bearing on league table position which is used by both prospective students and graduate employers.

We would like to thank our students for this positive feedback.

Welcome Week 2012

The School of Psychology’s packed Welcome Week schedule ended with a free BBQ in Keynes College Courtyard for all new students and staff again this year.

Introducing Dr Zara Bergström and Dr Joseph Brooks

Zara Bergström is a cognitive neuroscientist who investigates the brain basis of human memory. She moved from northern Sweden in 2000 to study Psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London. As an undergraduate, she became interested in the elusive role of consciousness in cognition, and in particular, whether conscious memories could be intentionally suppressed. She pursued this research question using EEG as a PhD student at Goldsmiths, supervised by Alan Richardson-Klavehn and Jan De Fockert. This research programme produced evidence that conscious memory suppression is indeed both remarkably successful and flexible, which was a highly novel demonstration in the field.

After completing the PhD in 2008, Zara moved to the University of Magdeburg in Germany, where she began to investigate potential forensic applications of memory control research. In 2009, she moved back to the UK, this time to the University of Cambridge, to work as a Postdoctoral Research Associate with Jon Simons. In Cambridge, she used a number of cutting edge brain imaging methods (fMRI and combined EEG/MEG source localisation) to investigate the timing of involvement of different brain regions during conscious recollection.

Zara’s current research uses a variety of behavioural and cognitive neuroscience techniques to investigate interactions between intentional and automatic processes during long-term memory retrieval. She is particularly interested in the neurocognitive mechanisms that allow us to control what aspects of our past we consciously remember —both in terms of facilitating memories that we want to retrieve, but also preventing unwanted memories from automatically coming to mind.

Joseph Brooks studies visual perception and attention using cognitive neuroscience methods including psychophysics, EEG, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), eyetracking, and studies of neurological patients. In particular he has focused on questions such as: How does our brain construct a 3D perception of the world from two dimensional retinal images?

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How does our brain decide which version of an ambiguous picture (e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rubin_vase) to see at a given time? Do different visual illusions share neural mechanisms or rely on different visual processes? Joe is also interested in how movement of our attention is affected by the structure of the world. In addition to measuring behaviour, he hopes that he can develop theories about the relationship between particular patterns of brain activity and behaviour.

Recently, Joe has also developed interests in understanding how human vision and attention are modulated by social factors in understanding how human vision and attention are modulated by social factors. He hopes that he can explore this relationship in the laboratory and in the real world. In addition to measuring behaviour, he also hopes to explore how our vision and attention are affected by the structure of the world. He also hopes to develop theories about the relationship between particular patterns of brain activity and behaviour.

The Social Psychology Section (SPS) holds an annual conference, with this year’s being in the beautiful city of St. Andrews, Scotland. I am currently the elected social psychology representative in PsyPAG (the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group), which is a national organisation for all psychology postgraduates run by postgraduates, whose aim is to support students and act as a vehicle to represent postgraduates within the British Psychology Society (BPS). Therefore, as part of this role, it allows me to sit on the SPS committee and also run the annual postgraduate workshop held just before the main conference. This year I invited several speakers, including Mario Weick from our very own School, to attend and give workshops based on a variety of topics. The workshop was a success, and all postgraduate delegates commented on how useful the workshop had been. Further, it allowed great networking opportunities, as attending your first conference can be unnerving, so meeting others who are in a similar position in a welcoming environment can ease you in slowly. Indeed, several people who attended this workshop have set up a networking group to keep in touch with each other post-conference. Next year I will be organising the workshop again, where I aim to have useful and topical workshops for the postgraduates attending. If you are a postgraduate who is thinking of attending the SPS conference, I do recommend coming along to the workshop as it can provide you with both relevant information on important topics and also enable networking with fellow postgraduates. PsyPAG offers several bursary schemes, which could be used to help fund your attendance at the workshop. If you have any questions about PsyPAG and the bursary schemes, the SPS postgraduate workshop or the annual conference itself, don’t hesitate to get in touch.

I have just begun studying psychology at Kent and so far, I’ve found it fascinating and so exciting. As well as studying for my degree at university, I train as a competitive ice dancer eight times a week and compete internationally for Great Britain. I have been ice skating as long as I can remember, and it’s always been an important part of my life. I particularly like the fact that the layout of the course seems a lot more practical than A-Levels which were purely theory. I am taking forensic psychology as my wild module, and I find the wild modules great as you can study specific areas in more detail that relate to your career plans. I have to keep myself organised in order to continue to train hard as well as work for my degree, but the lecturers and rest of the staff have all been really helpful and supportive and so I’m really looking forward to the rest of my time at Kent.
Recent Publications


Kent Psychologists in the Media

Dr Joachim Stoeber contributed to the October 2012 issue of Psychologies Magazine. In the article titled ‘Identify your perfectionist hotspots’, Dr Stoeber says that people with exceedingly high standards are usually dissatisfied and lack pride in their achievements. This kind of perfectionism is maladaptive.

To avoid the inevitable partnership between perfectionism and procrastination, Dr Stoeber suggests focussing on smaller areas of a whole task.

Congratulations to Eduardo Vasquez who has been awarded 2,500 Euros by Polismyndigheten Stockholms Lan (Stockholm Police) for an evaluation of SGIP Conference.

Congratulations to Tim Hopthrow (PI), Dominic Abrams (Co-I) and Dinker Sharma (Co-I) who have been awarded £103,031 by DSTL for a project entitled “Group Processes and Intergroup Relations in Defence and Security”.

Congratulations to Theresa Gannon who has been awarded a grant of £13,917 by the HM Prison Service for a project entitled “Fire Intervention Programme for Prisoners on Isle of Wight”.

Congratulations to Dominic Abrams (PI) and Miki Vasiljevic (Co-I) who have been awarded £6,000 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for a project entitled “DR 12 – What happens to people’s identities when the economy is suffering or flourishing?”

Congratulations to Lindsey Cameron and Heather Ferguson on their runners-up University Teaching Prize 2012 of £1,500.

Congratulations to Dominic Abrams who will become SPSSI’s President-Elect in September. He will serve as President in 2013-14.

criticism and advice. (pp. 73-85). Peter Lang Publishers.


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Join the Book Group Challenge
The Book Challenge was launched last year and includes a list of 25 books - recommended by Psychology staff and postgraduates. Your challenge is to read a number of these by the time you graduate. If you succeed in meeting the Challenge, you get a certificate at the end (good for CV!) in ‘Advanced Reading and Interpretation’. For more information about the challenge, the list of books, etc, please see our page on Moodle (‘The Book Group’). If you would like to sign up and join our mailing list about meetings and more, then please email H.Ferguson@kent.ac.uk.

Attend Café Psychology
Café Psychology was launched in Autumn 2011 to encourage more personal contact time between staff and students. Events are informal and they provide a chance for academic staff to talk animatedly about a subject that we are interested in and passionate about. It will also give you an insight into ‘hot off the press’ research that is going on in your department, by your lecturers. To be held in the KLT4 from 5pm on alternate Mondays during term time. See the Moodle page (‘Café Psychology 2012-13’) to plan ahead.

Postgraduate Students - Go To Research Seminars
We have an exciting set of talks ahead of us with topics catering for a wide range of interests this term. Talks take place on Thursdays 4-5pm. The first talk of the series will be given by Dr Stephen Gibson from York St John University on 11th October. The title of the talk is ‘The last possible resort’: Rhetoric and standardization in Stanley Milgram’s obedience experiments. Please see the Events calendar on our website for details on future events: http://www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/events/index.html.

Welcome Week 2012 Continued
As in previous years, Welcome Week included presentations from key members of staff, tours of the School and library, talks on IT provision and electronic submission, inductions to the compulsory stage one modules, and voluntary research participation plus much more.

A new addition in 2012 was the Student Transition Module available on Moodle. The aim of the online resource is to assist new students with the transition to a Higher Education Environment. A Q&A forum, Psychology Quiz and Video Streams from staff and students on what to expect from Psychology at Kent were all accessible in addition to the Welcome Handbook and timetables. We hope this served you well!

If you have any suggestions or comments regarding your Welcome Week experience, please do pass them on to us.

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 is a range of services available to all Kent students including the following:

- Careers Advisory 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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