

GRADUATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter for our research student community

E7



Ideas to share

Our students showcase their research



News



Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Postgraduate Research Symposium

Research students from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences showcased their work at another successful Postgraduate Research Symposium.

Over thirty-five HLS students came together during 2019 to share their research with specialist and non-specialist audiences. The symposium included informative posters and inspiring talks that covered all aspects of the health and life sciences, and, as in previous years, prizes were awarded to the best posters and presentations.

After welcome speeches from Professor David Evans and Dr Emma Davies, guests were treated to presentations on topics relating to sports science, nutrition, nursing, social work, psychology, biology and the medical sciences. Research students also took the opportunity to network with trusted suppliers who kindly agreed to sponsor the event.

Closing remarks were given by Emeritus Professor Nigel Groome, who touched on his career highlights and offered valuable tips to those in attendance. Dr Astrid Schloerscheidt and Professor David Evans then handed out prizes for Best Talk Presentations and Best Poster Presentations.

Teresa Joyce, second-year Psychology student and recipient of the Pearson Best Psychology Presentation and Best Poster Presentation (Year 2) prizes, described the event as a “fantastic learning opportunity.”

Speaking after the event, Teresa said that “winning this prize boosted my confidence before presenting my research at the 13th International Conference on Developmental Coordination Disorder in Finland later this year. Many thanks to everyone involved in organising the event and to all the sponsors, especially Pearson!”

Professor Nigel Groome also praised the work of the organising committee: “The event was very well organised and gave a lot of time for meeting people and discussing their work. No one could fail to be impressed by the way the students spoke about their work in an impromptu way. We can all tell when people love what they are talking about and know what they are talking about.”

“The University is setting very high standards in postgraduate research and it was a pleasure to attend the event and particularly to meet students. Congratulations to everyone involved.”

Best Talk Presentation

1st: Charlotte Pain (Biological and Medical Sciences)
2nd: Alex Buffry (Biological and Medical Sciences)

Best Poster Presentation (Year 2)

1st: Teresa Joyce (Psychology)
2nd: Amjad Hasan Amin Jarrar (Sport and Health Sciences)
3rd: Natalie Curtis (Biological and Medical Sciences)

Best Poster Presentation (Year 3)

1st: Samuel Connelly (Biological and Medical Sciences)
2nd: Parmida Mohammadpour (Psychology)
3rd: Steven Hoff Williams (Biological and Medical Sciences)



Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment Research Student Conference

In mid-2019, PhD students from the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment were given the chance to share their research through posters, presentations and performances at the Faculty's annual Research Student Conference.

This year's student-led conference was a truly multidisciplinary event. Each session comprised mixed-theme presentations and organisers left plenty of time for participants to engage in cross-disciplinary discussion and debate. The conference also included presentations from the Faculty's Research Groups and a dedicated networking area where 'Postcards from the Future' carried messages and tips from Oxford Brookes alumni.

The academic poster display was judged by a team of academics. First prize went to Saddam Zourob (Engineering, Computing and Mathematics) and tying in second place were Thomas Baker (Engineering, Computing and Mathematics) and Sheila Isabel Irigoyen Zozaya (Built Environment).

Speaking after the event, Margo Socha (co-organiser) said that she was "very proud of how it all turned out, particularly the Research Group presentations and messages from alumni, both of which were a new element to this year's conference." Margo also found the process of organising the conference "incredibly rewarding" and a "great networking opportunity, which brought together PhD students, Early Career Researchers as well as accomplished academics."

Catalina Morales Maya (co-organiser) described the event as a "great learning opportunity." As well as giving PhD students the chance to "gain some experience in the process of peer-reviewing," it also exposed them to "a diverse group of topics and research approaches."

Conference presentations are due to be published in a peer-reviewed publication and will be available to access online via RADAR, the institutional repository of Oxford Brookes.

Brookes' student's research in the international press

The *New York Post* and the *Daily Mail* were just two of the media outlets that reported on research conducted by Elena Račevska, PhD student in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Elena's research, published as a co-authored journal article in *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, investigated the relationship between intelligence, music preferences, and uses of music.

To conduct the study, Elena and Meri Tadinac (University of Zagreb) collected data from 467 teenagers in Croatia. After performing an intelligence test, participants were asked to rank musical genres in order of preference.

Elena found that those who earned the highest IQ scores displayed a clear preference for instrumental music.

Elena's research was picked up by the *New York Post* and the *Daily Mail*, both of which reported that "Smarter people listen to instrumental music."

Business School student appointed OxSID College Rep

Brookes' research student, Rajkamal Mann, recently served as a representative on the Oxford Society for International Development (OxSID) committee.

OxSID is a student-run society based at the University of Oxford that focuses on issues ranging from poverty to environmental sustainability.

As College Rep, Rajkamal was responsible for raising awareness of the society and publicising its events to members of the Brookes research community.

Further details can be found on the society's website: oxsid.org



Safe care practices and anti-cancer treatment in the US and Canada

In early 2019, Michael Mawhinney, research student in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, travelled to Canada and the USA to investigate new models of care for patients receiving oral chemotherapy.

Michael made the trip after receiving a Travel Fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, which funds outstanding individuals to travel overseas for up to eight weeks to research a topic of their own choosing among global leaders in their field.

Over the course of four weeks, Michael observed and learned from health professionals and researchers in the US and Canada who deliver oral systemic anti-cancer treatments (SACTs). By engaging with pioneering clinical and academic healthcare providers, Michael was able to formulate a series of recommendations and actions for application in the United Kingdom.

After returning to the UK, Michael stated that he found the whole experience “inspiring” and praised the “courageous and pioneering” individuals he met for their “altruism, passion and commitment.” He also thanked the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for awarding him the Fellowship and for enabling this “once in a lifetime opportunity.”

Details about the Travel Fellowship can be found on the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust website: wcmt.org.uk

Wartime propaganda at Oxfordshire County Library

In May 2019, Robert Williamson, PhD student in the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment, shared his research at an event organised by Oxfordshire County Library.

In a well-received 45-minute talk, Robert discussed the complex relationship between the British Government and the British Film Studios during the Second World War. After touching on government policy and its impact on the representation of hero figure in wartime feature films, Robert treated audience members to a short clip from ‘Listen to Britain’, a propaganda film produced in 1942 to support the Allied war effort. He then took questions from an eager audience.

As well as giving Robert the opportunity to hone his public speaking skills, the event also allowed him to gain valuable insights into his own research. Robert particularly appreciated the contribution of one audience member who, after spotting her father in ‘List to Britain’, agreed to let Robert examine her personal archive collection.

Robert found the overall experience “very rewarding” and believes that other PhD students would benefit from presenting their research at Oxfordshire County Library.



We are always looking for research students' news and success stories to feature in the Graduate College Newsletter. Please send any contributions to: asa-gcnewsletter@brookes.ac.uk

Research Student and Alumni Profiles

Here, along with our regular research student profiles, we speak to one of our PhD alumni.



**Dr Sarah Frodsham, Oxford Brookes Alumna
School of Education**

“My thesis examined how teachers develop creativity in primary science lessons and whether current Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies augment creative development.”

I first walked onto the Oxford Brookes Gipsy Lane campus in 2005, prior to the construction of the John Henry Brookes Building. As a prospective undergraduate student, my intention was to talk to a lecturer about applying for Brookes’ ‘Extended Sciences’ foundation course. Fourteen years later, I am fortunate enough to hold the position of postdoctoral Research Assistant at the same University.

My current position is funded by the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT). As a Research Assistant, I work alongside Professor Debra McGregor and Polly Bell (PSTT-funded research student) to examine what creativity looks like at different moments and in different places in science education, from primary school to Higher Education. This theme underpinned my own PhD research project.

Reflecting back on my time as a PhD student at Brookes, I feel that the approachability of senior staff members was significant. For example, after completing my MSc in 2013, I tentatively emailed Professor McGregor to arrange a meeting. Two weeks later, we were sitting in her office discussing how creative pedagogical practices nurture and develop children’s learning in science. I was then invited to study this topic as a PhD student with funding from the PSTT, and Professor McGregor became one of my supervisors.

During my PhD studies, conversations with supervisors, academics and fellow research students changed my worldview for the better. Numerous opportunities to form (and reform) my ontological and

epistemological perspectives also presented themselves at seminars, conferences and Research Groups. Although learning to take friendly criticism was sometimes challenging, I quickly realised that unless I shared my understandings I could not make significant progress.

Engaging in critical debate was and still is rewarding. Brookes offered supportive groups – such as the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) Research Group and monthly writing workshops – which helped me find my written academic voice.

The years that it took to finish my PhD and find further employment have not been easy. To use a useful but not unique analogy, it has been a rollercoaster ride. However, when I was able to get out from behind my nausea-inducing desk, I attended meetings about applying for external and internal funding. These were supported by in-house staff members and were recommended to me by my supervisors.

Participating in these gatherings enabled me to envisage life after the research degree. It also gave me something to strive for once the initial goal of completing the PhD had been achieved.

I am now fully engaged in a fantastic project that pushes me academically every day. It has provided me with international opportunities to collaborate on articles and present papers at conferences around the world. Tomorrow is another day and I look forward to finding out what I can do next.



Felix Shaba – Oxford Brookes Research Student Accounting, Finance and Economics

The title of my PhD is ‘Microfinance Intervention and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: The Case of LAPO Microfinance Bank Ltd.’

Before I started my PhD, I worked in both the academic and non-academic sectors. After working as a Software Tester for a few months, I felt the urge to pursue a career that would enable me to fulfil my childhood dreams.

My research was borne out of a desire to contribute to the alleviation of poverty among women in Nigeria. I grew up in a remote village where poor women strive daily to cater for their household. They do all sorts of menial jobs to supplement their meagre income from subsistence farming, and because they are unable to access resources on an equal platform with men, they often remain poorer than their male counterparts.

Several studies have been conducted on microfinance and women’s empowerment, but most have used quantitative techniques, thereby ignoring the perspectives of women participants. Drawing on John Friedmann’s ‘alternative development’ theory and Kate Young’s concept of ‘transformatory potential’, my research uses a qualitative approach to unravel some of the uncertainties about the role of microfinance in women’s economic, social and political empowerment.

I have conducted numerous interviews and organised a focus-group discussion involving 71 women from Lagos East in South West Nigeria. The findings reveal that financial autonomy is vital for women’s economic empowerment; social empowerment facilitates the

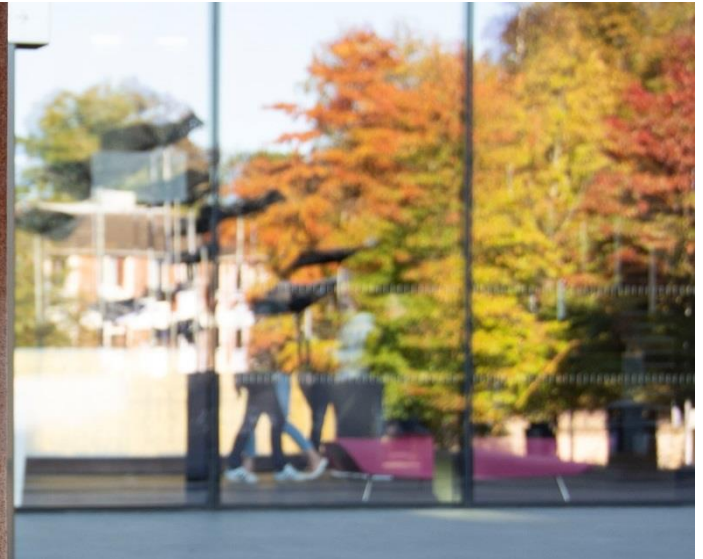
sustainability of their economic empowerment; and political empowerment ought to serve as a conduit through which women can collectively bring about policy change in their favour. A major implication of the study is that women will be unable to achieve full empowerment unless they overcome their apathy towards political representation.

It was quite easy for me to settle into Brookes’ research environment. I have earned two master’s degrees in the UK, so I have a good knowledge of research. Although it was initially a bit of a challenge to adjust back to academic life, I received fantastic support from my supervisors, the research team, the library resources, and a series of seminars and conferences. The research training has been excellent and the workshops, induction, and social networking events have been highly relevant to my research and personal development.

One of the things I enjoy most about being a PhD student is gaining knowledge and expertise in a field that I intend to practice in. Being in a research environment is quite stimulating and the PhD has given me the opportunity to meet and interact with people who I never would have crossed paths with.

Being a self-financed student is a considerable challenge, but I get my motivation from the fact that I am doing this PhD for the purpose of transforming the lives of poor women and their children in developing countries, mostly in Nigeria. I intend to do this through projects and programmes organised in liaison with governmental and non-governmental organisations.

My research uses a qualitative approach to unravel some of the uncertainties about the role of microfinance in women’s economic, social and political empowerment.



Hester Bradley – Oxford Brookes Alumna English and Modern Languages

The title of my PhD is ‘The Woman in the Moon: Shakespeare, Lyle, women and mental disorder.’

Before I started my PhD, I completed an MA in Shakespeare and Creativity at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, a satellite campus of the University of Birmingham. I heard about Oxford Brookes University and my current supervisor through my MA supervisor at the University of Birmingham, Professor Ewan Fernie.

My project was on the moon as a character in early modern drama. What I term the moon-character is a surprisingly popular (and usually female) representation of the moon through a classical analogue such as Diana, Phebe/Phoebe, or Cynthia (Roman names for Artemis); Luna (the Roman personification of the moon); Hecate and Proserpina (underworld components of the Roman triumvirate moon goddess); and Titania (another name for Diana in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*).

I focused on the moon-character in the plays of John Lyly and William Shakespeare, looking comparatively and chronologically at the way the representation of this character changed between the two playwrights. In doing so, I discovered Shakespeare’s continuing use of Lyly’s drama as a source for his own presentation of this mode of character.

I also looked at the degree to which moon-characters denote an impulse to singularity which offers a form of

individual identity on the stage. I found that this impulse to singularity involves an evasion or elision of the traditional static categories of sexuality and gender and that the moon-character is often rendered as either lunatic or utopian (or both). The moon-character is a site through which the rigid early modern binaries of inconstancy/chastity and lunatic/utopian are questioned and sometimes even dismantled.

It took me a while to settle into the research environment at Brookes. When I first arrived in Oxford I did not know anyone at the university. The departmental training, symposiums, and seminars were good places to meet up with other research students; they gave me both a break from and inspiration for my own work. I also enjoyed other initiatives at Brookes such as the poetry centre and the focus on diversity.

The best thing about being a research student was having plenty of time to dedicate to forming my own project. But this could also be the worst thing – I found it difficult to work out a stable structure for my time, and working on something intensely by myself was often isolating. I think it is really important to acknowledge how difficult undertaking solo academic research can be.

I want to continue within academia for as long as I can. I would like to read, write, and teach outside the academy too, and to carry on looking for ways in which academic research can be more accessible.

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Coming up

Research student training sessions to look out for this academic year.

Please check for updates to this programme, including dates and venues, at www.brookes.ac.uk/research-student-training.

GRADUATE COLLEGE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Semester 1 – 2019

- How to successfully address the challenges facing most research students
- Introduction to Research Impact: What, Who, Why, When, Where, How?
- The Viva Examination
- Training to Enable Supervisors and Research Students to Develop Applications for Ethical Approval
- Tackling the writing up stage of the research degree
- Time Management: planning your research degree and keeping up momentum

Semester 2 – 2020

- Publishing your research data: with particular focus on Oxford Brookes' institutional repository RADAR
- Research degrees – strategies for successful part-time study
- Managing your Supervisor and building a good working relationship with your supervisory team
- The Viva Examination
- Communicating your findings: publishing, Open Access, metrics and impact
- 12 tips on how to make LinkedIn work for you

LIBRARY AND IT TRAINING

Semester 1 – 2019

- Finding Information for Your Research
- Endnote Training - Managing information overload

Semester 2 – 2020

- Copyright for research students: RADAR and submitting the electronic version of your thesis
- Research-related software training

CAREERS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Semester 1 – 2019

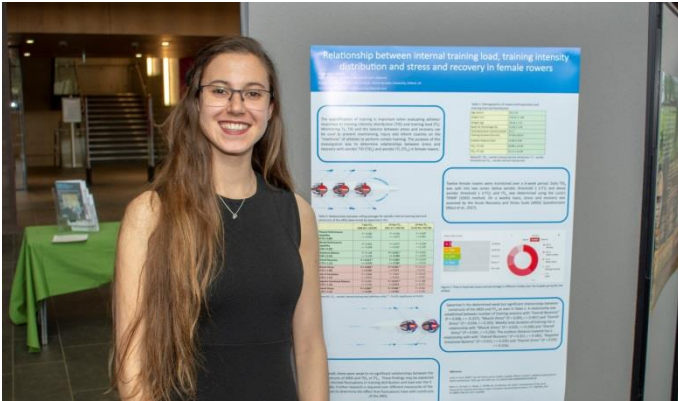
- Coaching Tools for Personal and Professional Development
- Design your Life Beyond the PhD
- How to Get a Job: Successful Applications and Interviews for Researchers
- How to Get a Job: Applications Masterclass for Researchers

Semester 2 – 2020

- How to Get a Job: Finding Job Opportunities
- How to Get a Job: Applications Masterclass for Researchers
- How to Get a Job: Interview Skills Masterclass for Researchers
- Planning for a Career in Academia

Stay connected

Brookes has a strong and vibrant research student community. Here are just some of the ways you can stay in touch:



Annual Graduate College Research Student Exhibition

All research students are invited to showcase their work at the 2020 Graduate College Research Student Exhibition.

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to share your research with fellow students, staff members and external visitors. You can present your research using posters, journal articles, audio-visual performances, PowerPoint presentations, book chapters and many other mediums. You will also compete with your fellow research students for a chance to win a range of cash prizes.

DATE: Wednesday 22 April 2020 (the exhibition will also be open on Thursday 23 April 2020)

TIME: 10.00am–5.30pm

VENUE: The Forum, John Henry Brookes Building

Prize giving will take place during the networking lunch that will be provided for all those attending the event.

Click [here](#) for submission details or email the organisers at asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk

Research Degrees Team Office Hours

9.00am–4.30pm

When Student Central is closed and the shutter is down at the counter, we are still available during office hours. A phone is mounted on the side of the drinks vending machine opposite the office. Please call x4244 (or 01865 484244 from your mobile) and one of us will come out and help you with your query.

The Graduate College organise and support a variety of events for research students, including training and social get-togethers.

For further information on all our activities please visit:

www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/events



Follow us on Twitter @BrookesGC

RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTSHIPS

Oxford Brookes University is pleased to offer funding towards a range of full-time Studentships.

Visit the following website to access full details of all funding opportunities currently available:

www.brookes.ac.uk/studentships

“My supervisor has offered me all the support that I have needed and has been a real inspiration for my continual interest in the research area.”

PRES 2019

89%

of Oxford Brookes research students felt that their supervisor/s had the skills and subject knowledge to support their research.

PRES 2019

SEASONS GREETINGS

From the **Research Degrees Team**

Wishing you a happy and relaxing Christmas holiday.
We look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

