

# GRADUATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter for our research student community

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## NEWS



### GRADUATE COLLEGE RESEARCH STUDENT EXHIBITION 2017

This year's Graduate College Research Student Exhibition took place on 3 and 4 May 2017 in The Forum of the John Henry Brookes Building. This annual display of research students' work from across the University included vibrant posters, abstracts, movie presentations, and a 'Novel Food Lab' looking at people's acceptance of insects for human consumption.

As always, there were cash prizes for the best exhibits and they were awarded to: Catherine Lowenhoff, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences; Anne Youngson, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; and Margo Socha, Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment. Special commendations were also made to: Somhatai Timsard, Oxford Brookes Business School; Francisco Gomez, Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment; and Findlay Bewicke-Copley, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences.

The judges were Dr Tom Crook, Chair of the Research Degrees Committee; Professor Susan Brooks, Research Training Co-ordinator; and Mr Richard Francis from Learning Resources. The judges all brought different expertise to the difficult task of selecting prize winners from the wide range of engaging exhibits. The competition was open to all research students, from any discipline and at any stage in their programme and this year's work showcased an extremely diverse range of topics. Rather than looking for evidence of research results, the judges focussed on the researcher's ability to present their work in an eye-catching and engaging way, such that it was understandable to a non-specialist in their field. The busy flow of visitors through-out the day demonstrated how well the exhibitors achieved this, and we hope this will inspire others to consider undertaking a research degree at Brookes.

### Insightful workshop from 'dynamic duo'

Two Oxford Brookes' research students told us about their experience attending the 'Media Players International' workshop in May 2017.

The workshop was highly insightful and the knowledge I gained will be invaluable when I want to disseminate the findings from my PhD study to the wider world.

Lily and Tim, the presenters, were a dynamic duo: they shared a wealth of experience from years of working with the BBC, which they presented in a fluid and enlightening manner with plenty of humour thrown in.

The workshop taught me how to build a positive relationship with the media and how we, as researchers, can shape the information we provide to get what we want from interviews and news articles. We got the chance to do a mock interview on camera, which we then watched back and had a second attempt at. This was a really useful exercise, evidenced by the fact that every single person in our group was much improved by their second go!

This was one of the most valuable courses I've ever attended, and the presenters were certainly the most engaging and knowledgeable presenters that I've experienced. I cannot recommend it more!  
*Parvati Perman-Howe, Department of Psychology, Social Work and Public Health*

The day started with considering what makes a good story, how media answers differ to conference answers, and advice on what journalists don't like. We were coached in preparing our message and how to deliver it in interview or to a lay audience. Finally we practiced our new skills with a recorded individual interview, receiving feedback and coaching before our final interviews, which were much better than the first.

Both trainers had a wealth of media experience in both press and broadcast interviews. It was a really worthwhile experience, challenging in parts, but very useful and one I would recommend to anyone who wants to disseminate their research better to a broader audience.

*Cara Law, Department of Psychology, Social Work and Public Health*



## PhD student awarded Postgraduate Fellowship

PhD student Rita Phillips, and Professor Vince Connelly, Programme Lead in the Department of Psychology, have been awarded a Postgraduate Fellowship with the Mellon-Sawyer Seminar Series 2017-18: Post-War: Commemoration, Reconstruction, Reconciliation.

The Fellows will be involved in the scholarly activities of the Mellon-Sawyer Seminar Series Post-War: Commemoration, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, led by Professor Kate McLoughlin (Oxford) and Dr Niall Munro (Oxford Brookes). The Series will bring together academics, creative practitioners and policy experts in a series of events to discuss the contribution of cultural practices of commemoration to post-war reconstruction and reconciliation across the world. Rita will be able to gain valuable professional training by working with the Mellon-Sawyer Postdoctoral Fellow to organise the seminars and chairing sessions at the Pecha Kucha event and the Postgraduate Conference. She will be offered access to appropriate training in the Humanities Division and from the Oxford Learning Institute's portfolio of courses for research staff.

Rita said "The Mellon Sawyer Seminar Series will be an excellent opportunity to meet interesting people from various backgrounds. I am very grateful for the possibility to join multidisciplinary seminars and to present my research in this setting. This will help me to broaden my understanding of commemoration, reconstruction and reconciliation and therefore contribute positively to my PhD 'Understanding and explaining societal perceptions of UK Veterans.'"

## TDE RESEARCH STUDENT CONFERENCE 2017

The annual Faculty of Technology, Design & Environment (TDE) Research Student Conference on 17 May 2017 showcased the diversity and quality of PhD research work in the faculty through poster exhibits and presentations.

The conference forms part of the faculty's Doctoral Training Programme (DTP) which provides both general and subject specific research training while creating a supportive inter-disciplinary network for students. To this end, the conference was very much a student-led initiative organised by postgraduate research student volunteers (Miguel Ferreira, Isabel Zozaya and Lukman Lawal) with support from Dr Sue Brownill (Chair of the DTP) and the TDE Research Support Office.

The conference opened with a welcome from Professor Ray Ogden, the Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange in the faculty, and Dr Sue Brownill.

Three parallel sessions ran throughout the day covering broad subject areas ranging from architecture, arts and the built environment to computing, mechanical engineering and mathematical sciences. Sessions included live performance art, short films as well as excellent presentations of ongoing research. This not only sparked off fascinating discussions about what makes a PhD and different methodological approaches, but also showcased the exceptional presentation skills amongst our students. Indeed one of the aims of the conference was to help build these skills and familiarise students with the formats and expectations of international research conferences. All sessions were chaired by the faculty's Postgraduate Research Tutors and each participating student received a certificate to acknowledge their contribution.

The sessions also featured engaging presentations from two of our Visiting Research Students. Clarice de Oliveira gave an urban project ontological critique while Namiko Minai presented research analysing where houses should be located in the context of Japan's natural disasters.

During lunch and breaks, there was a good opportunity to view posters. As always, the conference provided a dynamic meeting point for multidisciplinary interactions among staff and students and a good viewpoint of the excellent research being undertaken by the TDE research students.



# RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES

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**Anna Maria Barry**  
School of Arts

The title of my PhD is 'Home-grown Heroes: The Figure of the British Male Opera Singer in Nineteenth-Century Culture'.

I was first attracted to Oxford Brookes when I found out about the OBERTO Opera Research Unit. I knew that I wanted to work on nineteenth-century opera singers, so got in touch with Dr Alexandra Wilson to discuss my ideas. I joined the department as a PhD student in January 2013.

During the nineteenth-century, opera singers were major celebrities; the equivalent of film stars or rock stars today. Despite this, they have been almost completely forgotten - perhaps because their careers predated recording technology. Although scholars have produced much work examining female opera singers of the nineteenth-century, male opera singers have been almost completely overlooked. This is where my research comes in. I argue that male opera singers were key cultural figures of the period, who collaborated with literary giants such as Byron and Dickens and moved in influential circles. I am interested in how singers interacted with the celebrity culture of the period, especially through autobiography, portraiture and the press.

I also explore fictional representations of male opera singers in a wide range of nineteenth-century literature.

Although based in the Music department, I consider myself to be a cultural historian. I do not study 'the music', but am interested in singers and their cultural contexts. I have drawn on a wide range of archival sources over the course of my research including collections of letters and diaries belonging to singers, which have been fascinating to work with. I was also lucky enough to receive funding for a trip to archives in New York and Washington DC last year. I am really keen to share my research with as wide an audience as possible, as I believe the stories of these amazing men and their achievements deserve to be known.

I plan to apply for postdoctoral positions in order to pursue my next project, concerning theatrical travel writing of the nineteenth-century. I plan to keep writing and pursuing work as a freelance historian and have already had some articles published. I plan to publish my PhD research as articles and would ultimately like to write books based upon my research for the popular history market.

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**Nadeem Khan**  
Department of Nursing

The title of my PhD is 'What factors influence nurses' intention to leave the adult critical care settings?'

Having qualified and practiced professionally in a large surgical ICU in Pakistan I decided to move to the UK to develop my career in nursing. I progressed to become a lead nurse in oncology before moving to critical care and I currently work as a Professional Development Nurse in Adult Critical Care.

The primary aim of my research project is to explore factors influencing nurses' intention to leave the adult critical care areas. The project also aims to develop strategies that could improve retention of critical care nurses, and to contribute to the body of knowledge and develop insights into the factors influencing the stability of the critical care nursing workforce.

The shortage of specialist nurses has been an issue for many decades. Although all areas of nursing are affected, critical care areas are especially vulnerable to recruitment and retention problems. A systematic review highlighted that nursing workforce shortages is a

global issue affecting both developing and developed countries and more prominent in specialist areas such as critical care. High nurse turnover in critical care areas has financial implications in terms of the resources required to recruit and retain nurses and impacts staff morale, productivity, patient safety and quality patient outcomes. Although high nursing turnover is evident, research into the factors that influence nurses' intention to leave critical care areas is lacking. This proposed study aims to provide greater insight into the issues surrounding nurses' intention to leave the critical care areas and use these insights to develop strategies that could improve the retention of this valuable workforce.

I love being a research student. Despite its challenges and hard work, I really enjoyed my first year and successfully completed a systematic literature review. The biggest challenge for me is balancing study with full time work. I have to be very organised! I aim to finish my PhD project on time and to a high standard. The dream job would be to become a 'clinical academic'. I plan to be in a patient facing role where I can give bedside nursing care, but also a role where I can further educate, practice, and expand the evidence base to high quality healthcare.

# ONE STUDENT'S STORY



**SARAH WATERS**

**Department of English and Modern Languages**

The title of my PhD is 'Melancholia Past, Melancholia Present'.

Shortly before beginning my doctoral studies, I completed a research MA in English literature at the University of Buckingham. My project focused on the influence of Shakespeare on CS Lewis, with a particular focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The exciting opportunities I had to work with previously unseen manuscripts gave me a real flavour of research and I was keen to pursue research further at doctoral level.

The PhD I applied for was a specific interdisciplinary programme working on female melancholia and depression. I was particularly interested in the way the project considered the interrelationship between the early modern period and the present day through Shakespearean drama, especially given the connections I had been forging between Lewis and Shakespeare in my previous research.

Early on, I took on departmental responsibilities such as co-convening the Department of English and Modern Languages (EML) research seminar series. I got to know staff beyond those members in my supervisory team and it led to many exciting opportunities. For instance, I have instigated and co-organised the inaugural EML undergraduate symposium. I was keen to offer final year undergraduates a chance I would have loved when I was undertaking my BA.

My research project looks at the relationship between female melancholia in the early modern period and female depression in the present day. It focuses on the experience of the female sufferers and draws on proto-medical early modern treatises as well as contemporary psycho-social research and diagnostic frameworks. I explore the early modern period as a time in which the female self emerges and to what extent melancholia plays a part in facilitating the development of female identity and agency.

Working in the field of medical humanities my research considers the representation of female melancholia on the early modern stage. I work with play-texts and plays in performance and draw on amateur and professional productions of the plays. I consider how contemporary productions emphasise ideas of melancholia, grief and depression, and to what extent they are indebted to early modern conceptions of melancholia and contemporary understandings of depression.

I consider the impact class and gender had on one's diagnosis and experience of melancholia and depression, then and now. I also focus on the influence of the environment (social and physical) through discussions of exogenous and endogenous factors on a sufferer's propensity to melancholia or depression, and the subsequent treatment they receive. While the thesis is mostly concerned with Major Depressive Disorder, I also discuss post-partum depression in the context of motherhood and loss in *King John*.

One challenge of undertaking a PhD is solitary study. Working in the research students' office has helped with this significantly: I can work in the same space as fellow research students and feel more like a member of the department. I also like working at the Bodleian Library; the Rad Cam or Duke Humphrey's are my favourite spaces. Friends made at conferences who are on the same journey are also invaluable supports.

There is a good range of research training offered. My favourite was run by two BBC presenters, about presenting your research to the media. I have also undertaken higher education teacher training. As well as research degree skills, lots of the training looks at life beyond the PhD which prepares you well whatever your plans after your doctoral studies. My dream job is to lecture and to be able to continue research - a career in academia is the ultimate goal.

# STAY CONNECTED

## AN EVENING @ MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Join us for a guided highlights tour of the museum followed by a drinks reception on the evening on **Thursday 13 July 2017, 5.30pm – 7.00pm.**

The Museum of the History of Science (MHS) houses an unrivalled collection of early scientific instruments in the world's oldest surviving purpose-built museum building, the Old Ashmolean on Broad Street, Oxford. Your 45 minute private guided tour will be led by renowned Assistant Keeper, Dr Stephen Johnston.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL and places are limited! Reserve your place now at [shop.brookes.ac.uk/product-catalogue/graduate-college/social-events/](http://shop.brookes.ac.uk/product-catalogue/graduate-college/social-events/)

If you have any further questions please email [asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk)



## MINI Plant Tour

Our first research students' social event of 2017 was a private guided tour of the MINI Plant Oxford, led by expert tour guides.

Plant Oxford is the birthplace and heart of MINI production. Manufactured to individual customer specifications, hundreds of MINIs leave the plant's assembly lines each day and since production of new MINI started in 2001, more than 2.5 million cars have been made at Plant Oxford.

There are more than 4,000 associates currently employed at Plant Oxford and over 1,000 robots apply between 4,000 and 6,000 spot welds to create the new MINI bodyshell. More than 200 checks are carried out during assembly to ensure the correct parts are fitted and the quality is as high as possible. It's amazing to think that a MINI is produced every 67 seconds!

Feedback received from the event was that it was a very enjoyable and worthwhile experience!

*"It was a fantastic opportunity to see engineering in practice. I am a mechanical engineering student and it gave me really good insight into life beyond study."* Habibullah Adil,

*Research Student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Mathematical Sciences.*

## Join our new group on LinkedIn!

### Oxford Brookes Research Alumni Community

Why wait until you leave? Join our growing and vibrant network of Oxford Brookes' research students, past and present!

Join now if you're looking for a professional social media platform where you can:

- engage with current students.
- stay in touch with Alumni.
- share career experiences.
- look at the transferable nature of your skills, within and beyond academia.

You request to join the group at [www.linkedin.com/groups/8579492](http://www.linkedin.com/groups/8579492)

## Research Students Society

The Oxford Brookes Research Students Society organise regular meet-ups for research students. You can find out more about current events by joining their Facebook group:

[www.facebook.com/groups/OBRSS/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/OBRSS/)



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We are always looking for contributions for future editions of the newsletter and they are welcome from all sections of the University. If you would like to get involved please email:

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