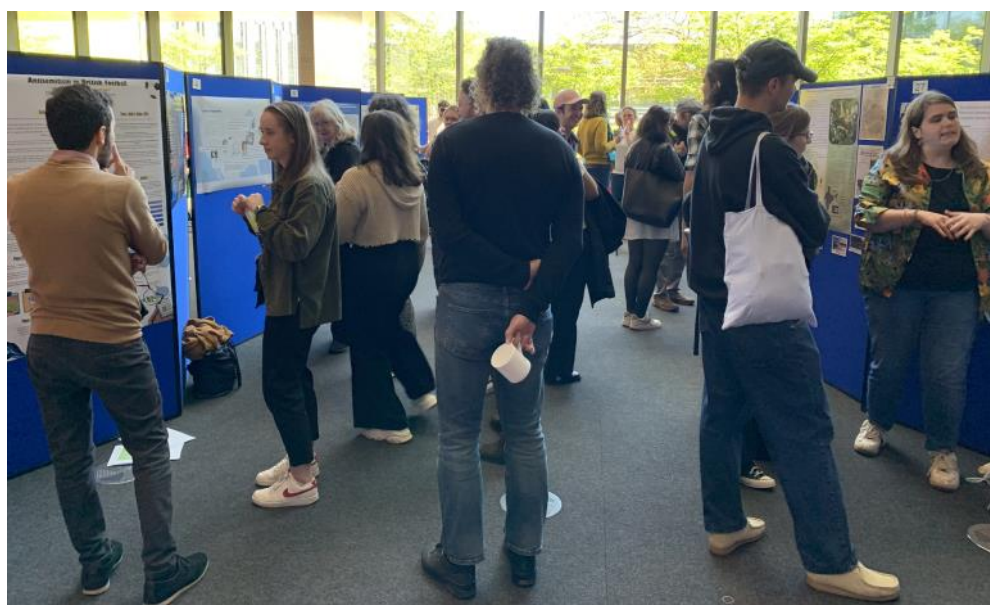


ISSUE E15

OXFORD
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UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter for the research student community



On Cloud Nine Showcasing Research Excellence



News

Health and Life Sciences Postgraduate Research Symposium This event runs every January, this year as always it was a complete success, Josie Jacobs PhD student at



HLS writes: I can't wait to be a REAL Doctor! Doing a PhD is hard. Not only the work itself, but it can feel very isolating at times and the juggle (struggle!), to do it alongside life and work, is real! That's why the January Symposium was such a joy, and I came away buzzing, feeling uplifted and inspired, AND with stronger sense of belonging to a - brilliant! - PhD community.

This year, the format was back to presentations being organised into groups by department, which enabled a wholly satisfying, 'nerdy' deep dive into subject areas which I found immensely interesting and informative.

I was inspired by the work of my peers and personally took something of value from each presentation. It was also hugely reassuring to hear students using similar research methods, and

to having similar Academic AND personal challenges.

We rarely get this chance to connect on a wider level and to gain a helicopter perspective of our own work through the lens of others' inspiring work. In Psychology they call this the 'elevation effect', whereby we are inspired to act as a result of seeing goodness and excellence, wanting to be and do better.

I am still reflective of this day together, taking with me the energy, ingenuity, honesty and perseverance of my fellow PhD students.

Apart from being inspired, we were also treated to a delicious lunch (which I later found out was thanks to our wonderful, generous sponsors).



Seemingly little gestures like this matter; it made me feel special and valued by the university.

Finally, we ended the day with a brilliant closing talk by Professor Koula. Her beautifully down to earth, human story of how she came to do her PhD, what she went on to do with it, and the invitation to own that we are 'REAL' doctors, was

immensely inspiring and motivating. There is a reason for these years of slog! I came home telling my kids that I would change policy one day!

Thank you for this great day of connection and inspiration - we are not alone and we are all doing great work. Let's keep going together!



Research Degrees Team

You can contact us on: rdt-researchdegrees@brookes.ac.uk



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News

Graduate College Annual Student Research Exhibition

A great networking event was held in The Forum on Tuesday 30 April with forty three students presenting their research on posters, printed word and video presentations. The exhibition was a wonderful, colourful and inspiring display of the amazing breath of fascinating research being carried out by



research degree students across the University. The judges of this event, Professor Susan Brooks and Dr John Runions from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and Dr Susannah Wright from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had a very difficult task in selecting the three winners of this year's exhibition and were very heartened and proud by the excellent research and buzz of this event thanks to the commitment and

enthusiasm of the students presenting. The winners were Emily Armstrong from the Biological and Medical Sciences Department with a poster entitled "To Bee, or not too Bee: Characterising an unusual nicotinic acetylcholine receptor from the honeybee, *Apis mellifera*" managing to make complex information understandable for a general audience Alu Al-Saadi from the Engineering, Computing and Mathematics Department with a poster on



"Humanoid robotic head development and motion characterisation", a judge commented *"a very eye catching poster, with both robotic head and relevant human anatomy, a highly technical project presented in a way to caught the attention of a general audience"*. Sidd Badri from the Anthropology and Primatology Department presented a poster on "Western Hoolock gibbons feeding on the inflorescence of *Mucuna pruriens*, in West Garo Hills, Meghalaya, India", with the novel idea of presenting



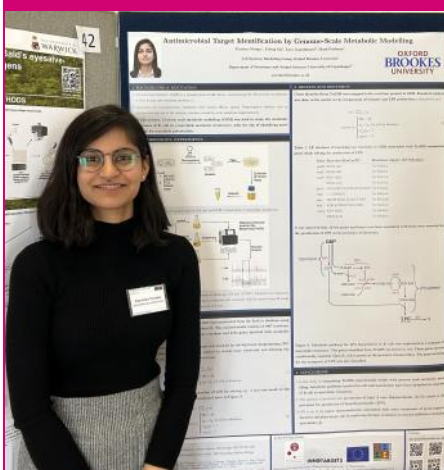
his research in the form of a primate CV, really engaging the attention of the reader. Because of the high quality of all the presentations, the judges gave two posters a special commendation, to Babz Clough from the English Department who presented a personal perspective on schizophrenia with her work entitled "Reclaiming a family from what remains" *"it was an attractive poster which got the reader asking questions about the relationship between the photographs and the text, I felt this poster drew the reader in and got to the core of the project"* a judge commented. Wendy Twist from the School of the Built Environment also received a commendation with her poster on "Ageing Better Together: Collaborative Housing and Healthy Ageing", a comment from one of the judges *"a beautifully laid out poster with a good balance between image and text conveying key information in a clear way"*.

Careers Training Programme

The Careers training programme for researchers is now live for bookings on www.brookes.ac.uk/Students/Careers/Researchers/Events

At Conferences

Alara Erenel writes about her experience at the EMBO Practical Course: Drosophila Genetics and Genomics. The European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg hosted an Practical Workshop on Drosophila Genetics and Genomics from 16-21 July 2023. Among the distinguished cohort of participants, I was privileged to be among the 20 individuals selected as a first-year PhD candidate from Brookes University. This workshop offered a comprehensive exploration of both contemporary and timeless facets of genetics, imaging, and genomics. With a focus on cutting-edge techniques, this program bridged the gap between seasoned scientists and emerging talent. Participants' research were showcased through poster presentations. For me, this workshop was an invaluable stepping stone in my journey as a budding Drosophila scientist. It offered not only the opportunity to meet and learn from luminaries in the field but also provided a holistic education encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects. On a personal level, the experience served as a profound source of motivation, igniting a fervour for my research. Undoubtedly, this workshop stands as a highlight in my ongoing PhD journey.



Pareena Verma PhD student at the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences presented her research at the Early Career Researcher (ECR) conference organised by the Ineos Oxford Institute for Antimicrobial Research, University of Oxford. A multidisciplinary conference, featuring poster presentations from early career researchers and talks from senior researchers across all disciplines in the field of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) ranging from Research & Development to policy-making with a keynote address on the importance of Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS). Pareena's poster entitled "Antimicrobial target identification by Genome- Scale Metabolic Modelling" was appreciated by early and senior researchers.

Full-time and fourth year PhD student, Hilary Brown, recently presented her work at the UK Society of Behavioural Medicine's annual conference in Glasgow. Based in the Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Hilary delivered a 20 minute oral presentation on the information needs and information help-seeking behaviour of patients with inoperable pancreatic cancer and their family carers. The theme for the two-day conference was "Changing Behaviour in a Changing World", with presentations on a wide-range of topics including cancer screening, climate change, weight management and healthy eating, tackling health inequalities and reducing alcohol and tobacco consumption.



'I really enjoyed presenting my work to an audience of academics and practitioners. It was a really friendly and supportive conference and there were some interesting questions and comments from the audience,' said Hilary. The UK Society for Behavioural Medicine is a network of academic and clinical health researchers interested in applying knowledge, theory and evidence on health-related behaviours to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the UK and beyond. The organisation pursues knowledge to inform the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of illness, and actively seeks to inform national policy and guidance relevant to the field.

News

Going the Extra Mile It has been a busy couple of months for all doctoral students ensconced at Oxford Brookes Business School. Among the many engaged scholars is Mitaali Katoch, who is orienting her work on enduring, contemporary, corporate luxury fashion firms. Apart from her academic studies, she is currently representing the school on the 2024 student panel of the Arc Universities Group (AUG) and on projects of open-access research. AUG is a collaboration between nine institutions of higher education hosted by Cranfield University and within the Oxford-Cambridge region. These alliances work alongside government, other institutions, and industry to support the growth of their respective economic territories, with the goal of national economic impact. The pan-regional partnership initiatives include major transport enterprises and development endeavours. Robust ties to these initiatives are critical to the burgeoning and varied ambitions of the OBBS doctoral community. Mitaali is also exploring the value of open-access research and how it may benefit the wider Brookes community. This April, she attended UKRN Open Scholarship training aided by an internal grant support via Joseph Corneli, the UKRN Network Lead under the Directorate of Research, Innovation, and Enterprise. UKRN is a peer-led consortium with a vision for an outstanding UK research system. Finally, as part of the *Oxford Brookes Business School Alumni Talks*, this March, Mitaali lectured on the business practices of the fashion houses she is studying. A video recording of this compelling subject is available on the *Oxford Brookes Business Alumni* YouTube channel, under the title



OXFORD BROOKES BUSINESS SCHOOL | OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

The ambidexterity of fashion houses: myth or reality?

21 March, 12.00pm until 1.00pm

Mitaali Katoch
Doctoral Student and Managing Director of Development

Virtual Event

[The ambidexterity of fashion houses: myth or reality?](#)

Influencers on British Films during War World 2 PhD student at the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment, Robert Williamson, presented a paper at the 2024 BAFTSS Conference at the University of Sussex on 5 April. The title was '*The impact of music-hall performers and their characters in British feature films during World War 2*'. Through this paper, Robert explored the profound influence of music-hall performers on British films during World War 2, with a particular focus on the intersection of performance and class dynamics. As the war unfolded, the entertainment industry became a crucial tool for boosting morale and fostering a sense of national unity. Music-hall performers, traditionally associated with working-class culture, played a pivotal role in shaping the cinematic landscape of wartime Britain. Robert examined key films from the era, analysing the impact of music-hall stars on the representation of workers in wartime narratives. Furthermore, the paper explored the symbiotic relationship between music-hall entertainment and the evolving class structure, shedding light on how these performers negotiated their roles within a changing societal context. By examining the cinematic portrayals of class and the performers themselves, in films such as *The Foreman went to France* (1942), and *The Ghost Train* (1941), Robert's research tried to illuminate the intricate interplay between popular entertainment, class dynamics, and the socio-political landscape of wartime Britain. Robert's paper contributed to a deeper understanding of the cultural and social forces that shaped British cinema during a critical juncture in history.



News

The Next Global Outbreak? Wildlife trade, both legal and illegal, is increasingly recognized as a key factor in the rise of emerging infectious diseases, and this is especially apparent in Asia, where large numbers of wildlife are openly offered for sale in animal markets. In some cases, this leads to global outbreaks or even pandemics as recently seen with SARS and COVID-19 for instance. A group of current Oxford Brookes University research students Emma Hankinson, Sophie Manson and Anna Fourage, alumni and academics from the Oxford Wildlife Trade Research Group and partner universities in Indonesia, Brazil, Canada and China, focused on the risk of Psittacosis becoming a zoonotic disease in the wildlife markets of Java and Bali, Indonesia.

Psittacosis is particularly prevalent in parrots (hence the name), and the trade in parrots was instrumental in the first properly documented pandemics caused by the trade of wildlife at a global level, the Great Parrot Fever Pandemic in 1929/1930. This pandemic was caused by psittacosis, a respiratory disease that can be transmitted to humans from infected birds.



Between 2014 and 2023, the authors assessed the risk of psittacosis becoming a zoonotic disease in Indonesia's animal markets where a wide range of wild-caught species, including parrots, are traded. Almost 4500 parrots of 21 genera from all parts of the world were recorded in 14 markets on the islands of Java and Bali. Genera offered for sale together did not cluster into geographic groups, were sold during all months of the year, and for 12/21 genera the presence of psittacosis had been reported in the past. The authors concluded that the omnipresence of wild-caught parrots from various geographic regions in large numbers within the same animal markets (visited by 100s of people daily) increases the likelihood that psittacosis is indeed present. This poses a real risk for the zoonotic spread of psittacosis to humans. The full article is available online.

Working as a Researcher in Industry Yanica Said is a recent graduate of the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences. Her PhD focused on developing computational tools that facilitate the analysis of metabolic networks. After completing her PhD, Yanica was curious to learn about what it is like to conduct research in industry. This curiosity led her to her current role as a 'Vertex Fellow', a one-year postdoctoral position at Vertex Pharmaceuticals.

The Vertex Fellowship started with a weeklong drug discovery bootcamp in Boston. As she transitioned into her new role, Yanica was thrilled to witness how the skills she developed during her PhD translate to an industry setting. For example, the ability to collaborate with scientists of various disciplines and to communicate information clearly are just as vital in industry as they are in academia. Indeed, over the past year, Yanica has collaborated with laboratory and computational scientists to investigate disease mechanisms using mathematical modelling and clinical trial data, the findings of which she shared through written reports and presentations.



A difference that she has observed is that the research direction in industry is driven by specific corporate goals, which whilst offering less flexibility than academia, has the advantage of facilitating a direct real-world impact - in this case, delivering medicines to patients!

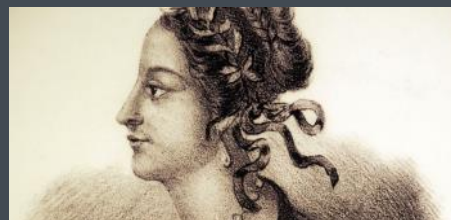
Congratulations

Fiona Tierney PhD student researcher at the Centre for Psychological Research, won the 2024 New Investigator award at the International Paediatric Sleep Association meeting held in Glasgow in April. She presented a poster entitled “What are the parent-perceived barriers and facilitators to consistent use of sleep-related routines with toddlers?”.



Kristopher Reeder PhD student in the School of Arts was recently awarded a partial fee waiver for editorial assistance from the Laura Bassi Scholarship which was established in 2018 with the aim of providing editorial assistance to post-graduates and junior academics whose research focuses on neglected topics of study, broadly construed, within their disciplines.

Kristopher's research explores improvisation, structure and creative risk taking involving the trombone.



Adam Tate PhD student at the Department of Education was awarded The National Teaching Repository Outstanding Contribution. This award recognises Adam's for sharing his work which has been of particular value to early career academics. You can see all of Adam's shared resources in the [National Teaching Repository](#).



Student's Publications

Abdullah A, Ahmad N, Ardiansyah A, Balestri M, Campera M, Chavez J, Dewi T, **Fourage A**, Gomez L, **Hankinson E**, Hedger K, Hendrik R, Imron MA, Leupen B, **Manson S**, Morcatty TQ, Nekaris KAI, Nijman V, Pereyra PER, Sintya E, Svensson MS, Xie M. (2024). Parrot trade and the potential risk of psittacosis as a zoonotic disease in Indonesian bird markets. *Birds* 5: 137-154.

Hair M, Yanase R, Moreira-Leite F, Wheeler RJ, Sádlová J, et al. (2024) Whole cell reconstructions of *Leishmania Mexicana* through the cell cycle. *PLOS Pathogens* 20(2): e1012054.

Natasha Eves (2024) Performing Reparative Craft: Oreet Ashery's Passing through Metal, *TEXTILE*, DOI: 10.1080/14759756.2023.2272103

Coe S, Cossington J, Collett J, Meaney A, **Mavrommati F**, et al. (2024) "The effect of breaking sitting time with physical activity breaks on cognitive performance in young people with cerebral palsy: an exposure response cross-over feasibility design" *Translational Exercise Biomedicine*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/teb-2024-2005>

Tate, A. and Glazzard, J. (2024) 'Immersed in the Transitioning Higher Education Sector: The Impact of Transitions in the Higher Education Sector in England on Staff and Students', *International Journal of Educational and Life Transitions*, 3(1), p. 3.

Let us know about your publications at asa-gcnewsletter@brookes.ac.uk

Past Events



Research Degrees Open Day After some months of planning and meetings we finally hosted an Open Day for our four faculties. It was a great day of networking and friendly chatting. There were poster and banner displays from all the faculties and student support services. We are very grateful to all our volunteers, academics, support staff and research students who gave up many hours and even a full Saturday to be there for those who wanted to know more about our research degrees. Although the turn up was as expected for free events, we are reviewing our marketing and the time to run future events in order to improve attendance. We agreed that it was a good trial after so many years without a faculty wide Research Degrees Open Day, and we hope this will be a yearly event. Keep an eye for the next one in our graduate college pages.

Ashmolean Tour This event was attended by new and current postgraduate students on a cold January afternoon. Bethy Airstone MSCR student at the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences writes: the guided tour of the Ashmolean Museum's highlight exhibits was fantastic. Starting with a pair of unassuming marble candelabra restored in the 18th century by Piranesi comprising pieces dating back to around CE 100-200.



Everyone loves a mummy, so off to early Roman period (CE 130-140) to see elegantly wrapped individuals with death masks giving good insight into style and fashion of the time. We were privileged to see the costumes worn by renowned Kabuki actor Bandō Tamasaburō V, each a work of art and lent to the museum by Tamasaburō himself. Next, Powhatan's Mantle, a deer hide with shell beadwork, started an interesting conversation about how the museum acquired pieces and if they should be returned. Whilst it is said the mantle was a gift from the Powhatan Chief Wahunsenacawh to Christopher Newport for King James I, as our tour guide described, we will never truly know the details of "the gift exchange". We made a stop at Alfred Jewel; a remarkably beautiful piece used in CE 871 used probably to point and follow text in a manuscript. Finally, we admired the great art work of William Holman Hunt as part of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood founded in Oxford in the mid 1800's. Overall the tour is a highly recommended afternoon out!



The Graduate College

The Graduate College organise and support a variety of events for research students, including training and social gatherings. Visit: [The graduate college events page](#)

Past Events

An Afternoon at the Museum In February 16 students enjoyed another fantastic tour at the Oxford Natural History Museum, the staff were exceptional as always, showing us their treasures and giving up their time at an extremely busy half term. We started our journey at the entomology section where we saw type specimens collected and labelled by Darwin himself (a real treat), the largest bee in the world which is now assumed to be extinct and the tsetse fly. Next, to see the remains of the Dodo and other birds now extinct. In the conservation department everybody had the chance to try some basic cleaning techniques and to learn how the conservator mixes artistic knowledge and science together to repair/mend very old museum specimens. At the end of our visit we were shown and touched the oldest piece of our earth mantle, meteorites and possibly a small piece of Mars, as well as enjoying fluorescent stones. We are very grateful to all the museum staff for organising this event. Join us next time if you were unable to attend.



Shut up and Write This event was organised by Leah Fitzpatrick PhD student at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with the support of the Graduate College. Embarking on a research degree can be very satisfying but also quite lonely, especially when writing up. Therefore the idea behind this event was for all MPhil/PhD students to dedicate time to write without distractions but knowing their peers were doing the same. Intense periods of silence and concentration were interspaced with coffee and pastries in the morning, and lunch later on. The day finished at the pub with some well earned drinks. This event was attended by 10 students from all faculties, the feedback received was fabulous. Leah will be organising more of these gatherings, so do keep an eye for emails from the graduate college.



Screaming Mandragora to Alice & the Cheshire Cat On Tuesday 7 May a group of research students enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of the Oxford Botanic Garden. The weather was glorious and Dr Andrew Lack, Senior Lecturer in Environment Biology at Oxford Brookes provided them with a fascinating tour of the gardens full of delightful facts and anecdotes. They experienced the beautiful Pocket Handkerchief Tree



(*Davidia involucrata*) fluttering in the breeze, learnt about the Screaming Mandrake (made famous by the Harry Potter films) with their hallucinogenic properties and roots shaped like a man, and marvelled at the stories of JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis and the Inklings an informal literary group in Oxford. If you missed this trip keep an eye on our Graduate College events for another great visit to the Oxford Botanic Garden.

Did you know that Lewis Carroll and little Alice visited the gardens frequently?

RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES



Shannon Skeffington
Centre for Psychological
Research

Thesis Title: Uses of music across the lifespan.

Listening to music is an important aspect of daily life that helps to shape identity, manage mood, and relieve boredom. However, as adults age, their engagement with music and reasons for listening to music change. In particular, enjoyment of intense contemporary music such as rock and rap decreases, as does the tendency to listen to music while completing other tasks and exploration of new music. This may be due to changing priorities and goals associated with the challenges of life roles such as student or parent. Furthermore, our ever-evolving sense of identity and increasing emotional intelligence may also reduce the need for music to manage our moods or express ourselves.

Music has been found to improve the well-being of young adults, but we live in an ageing society, so it is important to understand how music can affect the well-being of older people. However, research concerning music engagement across the lifespan is relatively scarce, and findings are inconsistent and inconclusive. Therefore, my research aims to re-examine whether identity, emotional intelligence, and life roles can affect music engagement across the lifespan. I am currently investigating this by using a questionnaire study where I will compare results across age groups from 16-80.

In the older population, the prevalence of brain injuries is rising. Listening to music whilst completing rehabilitation tasks can improve recovery in memory and attention for brain injury patients. Specifically, listening to music produced when patients were 10-30 years old may lead to significant improvements in cognitive function. These improvements may be due to the reminiscence bump, where events from these ages are more likely to be remembered than events from other ages. However, interestingly, these improvements are more notable among individuals with brain injuries than healthy controls. This illustrates the potential to use music from the reminiscence bump to improve rehabilitation outcomes. However, no studies have investigated the effect of music from the reminiscence bump on cognition in individuals with brain injuries.

Therefore, my project also aims to explore music engagement in individuals with brain injuries and critically evaluate whether music can affect cognitive performance in individuals with brain injuries. I will investigate this through a combination of interviews and experimental studies. Before I started my PhD course, I had just finished an MSc in Clinical Psychology at the University of Bath. My dissertation investigated the relationship between attention and recognition memory for the early detection of Alzheimer's Disease. I also worked part-time as a rehabilitation worker for people with brain injuries at Headway UK. Although both were valuable experiences, I was looking to progress into academia rather than clinical, and the studentship at Brookes seemed the perfect opportunity to make this transition and investigate music and brain injury rehabilitation, both of which are my research interests.

.....listening to music produced when patients were 10-30 years old
may lead to significant improvements in cognitive function.

RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES



Pareena Verma

Faculty of Health and Life
Sciences

Thesis title: Genome Scale Metabolic Modelling to Identify Changes in Metabolic Responses of Pathogenic Bacteria to Antibiotic Challenges.

My research project is a part of INNOTARGETS-ITN. It is a EU Horizon 2020 MSCA-ITN consortium of academic and industrial partners, the main objective of which is to apply innovative approaches for identifying metabolic drug targets in resistant pathogenic bacteria. The aim of this project is to use genome scale metabolic modelling and to integrate experimental data generated by collaborators into a model for exploring metabolic response of resistant bacteria when grown in the presence of antibiotics.

Metabolic modelling establishes a mathematical representation of the reactions present in the metabolic system under study, including inputs in the form of components of growth media and outputs in

the form of biomass components. Models are typically constructed from online databases and can be analysed by a number of established techniques, including:

1. Identifying groups of reactions working together in a metabolic network (Enzyme subsets).
2. Identifying groups of reactions which form minimal independent pathways in a metabolic network (Elementary modes).
3. Identifying sets of reactions that fulfil a given function (Linear Programming).

In this project, a genome scale metabolic model (GSM) of *E.coli* MG1655 has been constructed using available genomic database (EcoCyc) which contains genes and reactions present in the organism. The model is then curated by measuring energy conservation and biomass formation determined by applying LP to GSM. In addition to model construction and curation, the techniques to integrate experimental data into the GSM have been developed and a model has been analysed to identify changes in metabolic pathways required for growth under antibiotic challenges.

The integration of different kinds of experimental data into modelling analysis will help in developing new techniques for exploring how bacterial metabolism is involved with AMR and potentially in identifying novel drug targets.

I enjoy learning new things every day which is the beauty of research. Being a PhD student gives you freedom to explore your research topic as much as you can, but sometimes the pressure to finish in time and failures can be a major challenge. I try to have a balance working life and treat my PhD as any 9 to 5 job. My supervisor always suggests to take breaks and weekends seriously so that you can come back to the problems with a fresh perspective.

Although, there are never ending deadlines in a PhD, these help to keep you in check, becoming better at time management. The annual progress reports are also very helpful to the process of writing, as they are short documents which help you giving a kickstart to thesis writing.

Although, there are never ending deadlines in a PhD, these help to keep you in check, becoming better at time management.

RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES



James Dunlop MBE

Department of Film Studies

Thesis title: Filming the Filmmaker in First Person Participatory Documentary: Investigating the two camera SMARTI format tool as a documentary sub-mode.

My research focuses on the development of a new format tool in the Participatory documentary mode. Typically, participatory documentary filmmakers such as Marc Issacs (Lift) or Molly Dineen (Geri) use the standardised format of holding the camera and asking questions from behind the lens; they are only heard, and never seen. This has been a regular cinematographic style of Participatory documentary for decades, but what if this same style could also feature the self-shooting documentarian on camera? And what would the implications be? This work, for the first time,

explores the practical cinematographic tools that can put the documentarian on camera in a television format. Concentrating on one style in particular, the 'two camera SMARTI format tool', this research is creating a series of contrasting documentaries to contribute towards an answer to a number of questions: viability of this cinematographic technique in television production, acceptance of the format to a commissioner and spectator, and commercial viability.

Television programmes over the last 25 years have gradually utilised miniaturised cameras in creative and inventive ways as a format tool; a format tool being what makes the programme unique - Big Brother's format tool is putting contestants into a house together and filming their behaviour for example. Reality television programmes such as MTV's Fear (2001) and Josh Gates' Destination Truth (2007) have both utilised the format tool of equipping contributors with both a handheld camera showing their first-person perspective and a separate body camera that points back at the wearer, showing the viewer who is filming behind the camera. With both the contributor's first-person perspective and reverse shot filmed simultaneously, this format tool has never transitioned to Participatory documentary until now.

With the documentarian now on camera for the first time, it has created what the research calls as the 'relationship triangle'. Traditional Participatory documentaries show the interpersonal relationship between documentarian and contributor as the main focus of address – Marc Issacs talks to members of the public in a lift throughout his famous documentary Lift (2001) - with the very occasional breaking of the fourth wall by the contributor communicating with the audience down the camera. But with two cameras individually filming both the contributor and the documentarian simultaneously, it creates a new side of the relationship triangle; the documentarian can now also address the audience by looking down the lens of the camera that is looking back at them, breaking the fourth wall themselves. This is a dynamic that the traditional cinematographic style has never been able to achieve and puts the audience in the 'shoes' of the documentary filmmaker, allowing the witness of their own experiences. Through an inherently forced first person point of view, this format could arguably be the most personal approach to filming documentary yet.

The research aims to explore the implications of the new relationship offerings to the viewer and explores the different methods of cinematography of the SMARTI format tool - simultaneous, multiple angle, behavioural aesthetic, perspective method. Simply put, filming a documentary specifically on relationships and behaviours with multiple angles simultaneously from a first person perspective.

This practice-based work includes the filming of a wide range of contrasting documentaries in this new two camera SMARTI format tool as a proof of concept which, over the course of the research, are being released onto YouTube for public viewing. These can be found at [James's YouTube](#)

RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES



Simon McFadden

Faculty of Design, Technology &
Environment

Thesis title: An Investigation into True Crime Tourism, Screen Tourism and Dark Fandom.

My research project is concerned with exploring the interrelationship between dark tourism, screen tourism and dark fandom. Through my research, I aim to extend knowledge on factors which influence dark tourist visitation and general human interest in the macabre.

There are several reasons why I was drawn to Oxford Brookes University. Specifically, I was attracted to Oxford Brookes University after identifying a funded scholarship opportunity; advertised to conduct doctoral level research in a research area that was directly aligned with my research interests. Appropriately, I benefit from being supervised by experts in my area of study. I enjoy pursuing scholarly endeavours in a city famous for academic pursuits. Oxford City is an inspiring environment and without a doubt one of the best student cities in the UK.

I found it particularly easy to settle into life on campus at Oxford Brookes University. I enjoy availing of the facilities at the state-of-the-art Headington campus. I particularly value access to the PGR student office. I have strived working in this environment; a productive environment which has resulted in the forming of strong professional connections as well as personal friendships. I enjoy being a part of a friendly and diverse PGR community. This creates a vibrant atmosphere that has spurred me on.

I am particularly grateful to have been given additional opportunities which have allowed for personal and professional development. Throughout my tenure at Brookes, I have gained experience working as a research assistant, a co-authorship and associate lecturer. I have also availed of additional opportunities through taking the role of student representative.

There are various forms of enjoyment through being a research student. I enjoy the generally flexible work schedule. However, the allowance for flexibility requires me to be self-disciplined and self-motivated.

Noteworthy, PhD student life can be quite isolating with work generally being of an independent nature. However, I have overcome this potential pitfall through becoming strongly immersed in the PGR community at Brookes and availing of the spaces on campus to complete my work. I enjoy that being a research student has allowed me to learn and develop in the process of working.

Through being a research student, I have been able to immerse myself in my research topic; an area of study which is of genuine interest to me. The feeling that I am conducting innovative research subsequently provides a sense of purpose and reward.

The training offered at Oxford Brookes has aided in my personal and professional development. For example, I am pleased to have completed the teaching course prior to commencement of work as an associate tutor. My future plans are to pursue a career in academia. I aim to conduct further research in my specific, interdisciplinary field of study; building on findings obtained in my PhD study. In addition, I wish to pursue further work in education.

I aim to extend knowledge on factors which influence dark tourist visitation and general human interest in the macabre.

RESEARCH STUDENT PROFILES



Bethy Airstone

Department of Biological and
Medical Sciences

Thesis title: The role of actin isoforms in cancer adhesion of the endothelium during metastasis.

The metastatic spread of cancer is found to be the cause of over 90% cancer patient death. With this in mind it is important to understand metastatic cancer, pathways that drive this and promote cancer movement.

My project looks specifically at cancer cells that have reached the blood and how these become sticky and hijack the body's natural immune mechanism, to then allow the cancer cells back into local tissue which can form a new tumour. This project aims to investigate the spatial expression of actin in breast cancer cells and their role in binding to endothelial cells. Techniques to establish this include a wide range of microscopes, Immunocytofluorescence, flow cytometry and cell culture.

Living locally to Oxford Brookes University meant I heard lots of good reviews from friends. I completed A-Levels in Biology, Politics and Drama before opting to continue down a biology route. Whilst completing a Biomedical Science undergraduate degree at Brookes the lecturers were very supportive and invited me to join their weekly lab meetings, from there I applied to complete an MSc by Research.

The friendly research students and PI's really do make research at the university an enjoyable environment to be in, plus having access to the fantastic bioimaging unit.

The research environment was a big change compared with undergraduate study but the supervisors and other post graduate students are all very supportive as well as the university offering inclusive introductory sessions.

I really love all the additional learning that is encouraged, with the goal of 70 hours to help develop personal, professional and career skills. With additional work, comes some difficulties with time management, but with help from supervisors, it is easier to prioritise and manage your time more effectively achieving a good balance.

The research training is a great opportunity to begin presenting your results, get to know other research students and find courses that can shape the way you tackle your research.

I will be staying at Oxford Brookes to begin a PhD as part of the Groome Studentship in September continuing my current project.

The research training is a great opportunity to begin presenting your results, get to know other research students and find courses that can shape the way you tackle your research.

Coming up

Three Minute Thesis Competition

Tuesday 25 June 2024, Headington Hill Hall, 1- 3pm

Are you ready for a challenge!



Present your thesis in just three minutes using only a single static PowerPoint slide, no props, sound, moving images, poems or songs. For the winners there will be cash prizes, first place, runner up and for the people's choice.

This event will give you the skills you need to present your research to a non specialist audience.

The winner of this competition will be entered into the UK 3MT® online competition in August. **Deadline** for video submissions is **Monday 10 June 2024**.

Find out what to do and register for this event or for the celebration on the [Graduate college events page](#)

If you have any questions please email the event organiser at asa_gcevents@brookes.ac.uk



4th Annual Southern PhD Economics Conference

20-21 June 2024 at Oxford Brookes University.

This conference is organised by students at economic departments and schools of ten universities: University of Bath, Oxford Brookes University, City University of London, University of East Anglia, Royal Holloway, Middlesex University, University of Essex, University of Reading, University of Southampton and University of Sussex.

Conference Registration Fee

The conference fee is **£30 and should be paid by deadline May 20th, 2024**. It covers access to all sessions, buffet lunches, conference coffee breaks and conference material. Conference fees will not cover the participation in the voluntary dinner planned on the 20th of June. For more information visit the [conference website](#).



Oxford Mini Plant Tour

Did you miss last year's visit? Join us for another fantastic tour of the Mini Plant on Monday 8 July. Come and see how the iconic mini is created to each buyer's specification. This event is an exclusive group tour for 15 people.

More information will be available in the [graduate college events pages](#). Make sure to book your place.



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: asa-gcnewsletter@brookes.ac.uk

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

WRITING HUB | WRITE SPACE WRITING RETREATS

This year we are offering in-person writing retreats at Headington Hill Hall. There are 6 retreats, 2 of them online, between May and July. All retreats take place from 9am to 4pm with an option for half day attendance for the online retreats. Whether face-to-face or online the format is the same: writers of any style and level create a sense of community containing plenty of quiet space to make progress with your writing. The group reflects together on the writing process at intervals, and there will be a Centre for Academic Development tutor available to talk your work through with. In participants' words, Write Space is a stimulating, calm, good-spirited, constructive and productive place to work; you might also get ideas for how to start a writing group yourself, as some have. The retreats are open to all Brookes staff and students. The dates are: Friday 24 May (in person), Thursday 6 June (online), Friday 28 June (in person), Thursday 4 July (in person) and Tuesday 16 July (online). Book your place [here](#).

Research Degrees Placement Opportunities



The Research Degrees Team, is excited to provide outstanding 1-3 months Placement opportunities for our Research Degrees Students.

This initiative will provide you with the chance to:

- Gain direct experience within industry and or other organisations, which does not have to be within your discipline.
- Develop new and existing transferable skills.
- Expand your network and professional horizons.

A work placement will give you the opportunity to develop skills such as:

- Interpersonal skills and working as part of a team.
- Liaise with staff in different roles, including senior staff.
- Organisational skills, including project and event management, making effective use of resources and working to specific deadlines.
- Engage with different audiences and interact with external stakeholders.
- Data management and analysis.
- IT skills (e.g. web-pages development) and many more.

Currently all our opportunities are fully funded by the university.

(Eligibility criteria apply - for more information please contact rdt-researchdegrees@brookes.ac.uk)

Weekly Writing Group

The Migration and Refugees Network (MRN) is hosting a weekly hybrid (both online and in-person) writing group. This will be a friendly and informal session focused on individual writing. We plan to write together and have occasional short discussions on our progress to help motivate the group and build a supportive writing community. PhD students and early career scholars are particularly encouraged. We aim to cultivate a community of people writing on the area of migration/refugees but people with cognate interests are welcome. This group meets weekly on Wednesday afternoons both at Headington Hill Hall for those who would like to attend in person as well as online for those who are not able to get to campus. Please contact Dr Tamsin Barber (MRN Network Chair) t.barber@brookes.ac.uk for further details and/or the Google Meet link.

