It gives me great pleasure to introduce this first edition of our Graduate School Bulletin. The new University-wide Graduate School has only been in operation for one year but we already feel that we are an integral part of the doctoral research experience. We work in partnership with Schools and Departments to provide first class training and support for our postgraduate research students.

In addition to running our successful Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP), we organise a number of wider networking events. Our termly breakfast club sessions have attracted large numbers of doctoral researchers, as have our end of Autumn Term Seasonal Celebration and Summer Tea and Pimm’s party. You will be able to find out about some of the events that we are planning for 2012/13 in the pages that follow. We also provide support for supervisors, Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies, and administrative staff who are involved in supporting and managing postgraduate research activity.

We are very grateful to all the research students and staff who have so positively engaged with the Graduate School in the past year and we very much look forward to working with many more of you in the coming year.

The pages that follow showcase some of our successful events that we ran during our first year, and provide information about forthcoming events, competitions and new award schemes.

Dianne Berry, Director of Postgraduate Research Studies & Researcher Development

In this issue

Hearing it from our presenters 2
A postcard from Lyon 2

News

New bursary & awards 3
Summer tea and Pimm’s 3
New training room 3

Features

Research images competition 2012 4

Key advice from PhD students 6
Spotlight on confirmation of registration 6

Coming up

Doctoral Research Conference 7
PhD Researcher of the Year 7
Hearing it from our presenters

Our high quality Reading Researcher Development programme could not run without the help of staff from across the University. Last academic year, over 50 members of our staff presented one or more courses for us. We asked them why they contribute to the programme and what they get out of it. Here’s what some of them said:

Why do you contribute to the RRDP?

- ‘It is a really interesting way of using the skills I’ve built up in my research career, and to do something positive for other young scientists’
  Andrew Charlton-Perez (Meteorology)

- ‘It’s interesting and stimulating to teach students working at such a high academic level’
  Sarah Brewer (ISLC)

What is the most rewarding part of delivering RRDP courses?

- ‘Making a difference to a young scientist’s career. There is nothing more satisfying than being told by a student you have helped them in a tangible way with their PhD’
  Bob Rastall (Food & Nutritional Sciences)

- ‘Students are willing to contribute ideas and pose challenging questions. This keeps me on my toes and often raises perspectives I haven’t previously encountered’
  Averil MacDonald (Mathematical & Physical Sciences)

What is the most challenging part?

- ‘Moving away from the field-specific, UK-focused comfort zone’
  Catherine Leglu (Modern Languages)

- ‘Making my experience in a particular field relevant to others in different scenarios’
  Ellie Highwood (Meteorology)

And finally, would you recommend it to your colleagues?

- ‘Yes, students on the programme are highly engaged and dedicated to their research area’
  Christopher Cipkin (Library)

- ‘Yes, it’s an opportunity to teach a very motivated, intelligent audience who are the future of research at Reading’
  Michelle Reid (Study Advice)

A postcard from... Alice Savoie in Lyon

I was lucky enough to escape the British summer for a few weeks and spend time at the Musée de l’imprimerie in Lyon, France, as part of my PhD research. I am currently documenting the production of typefaces in France, England and the US between the 1950s and 1970s, and the museum’s collections hold some great material of particular relevance to this research. I am mostly interested in the archives of inventors, designers and companies who were active during that period, and luckily the material held by the Musée de l’imprimerie has proven very valuable. Most of the archives consist of personal correspondence, company reports, as well as designers’ original artwork from the post-war period. I helped archive parts of the collections which have not yet been catalogued, and even recently visited the home of the late Ladislas Mandel (a renowned French typeface designer) to collect his personal archives.

In the weeks before my return to Reading, I was involved in setting up an exhibition at the Musée, which presented a selection of the material I have been studying for my research over the past two years. I was also part of a team preparing for the congress of the Association of European Printing Museums, which took place in Lyon in October, and which discussed the challenges involved in the preservation, study and exhibition of typographical material.

Alice Savoie is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication. Her research project is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council as part of a Collaborative Doctoral Award between the Department and the Musée de l’imprimerie in Lyon, France.
New training room

The Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) provided 3,000 training places in 2011/12.

In response to programme demand, we have recently opened a new training room which has been supported by the University of Reading Annual Fund. This room is vital for the growth of the RRDP and will allow the promotion of the Graduate School as a conference venue for PhD student-led events.

New bursary and awards

The Graduate School is pleased to announce two new support schemes for our doctoral researchers.

Travel Bursary Scheme

Last year many of our PhD students told us that it is difficult to find relatively small amounts of money to contribute towards the cost of conference travel or research visits. This new scheme provides such support.

To be eligible, students must be studying for a PhD and in their second or third year (full-time) or third or fourth year (part-time) at the time of the conference/research visit.

Successful applicants will receive awards up to £100, provided that their School provides matching funding. There will be two deadlines for applications per year – 1 December and 1 June.

Further information about the scheme can be found on the Graduate School website – www.reading.ac.uk/gs-travel-bursary.aspx

Summer tea and Pimm’s

On 14 June the Graduate School provided an afternoon of tea, Pimm’s and plenty of cake at its Summer Tea Party. This included a baking competition and entries ranged from a Jubilee inspired Union Jack cake to Durian fruit cookies.

Party guests were invited to sample the cakes and vote for their favourite. A classic cherry and almond cake, baked by Food and Nutritional Sciences PhD student Jade Taylor, was declared the winner.

We’re currently planning the Graduate School’s Seasonal Celebration which will take place on Thursday 6 December. Details will be posted at www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/events

Student-led Events Scheme

Many of our research students like to organise thematic mini-conferences, seminars and workshops, and we very much wish to encourage them in this. This new scheme provides awards (between £100 and £400) to support PhD students who want to organise such events. The funding can be used to pay for catering costs, photocopying, event promotion, or travel for an external keynote speaker for one-off events.

Successful applicants will also receive advice and support from the Graduate School.

The events can include PGRs and staff from other universities, but Reading research students must comprise the majority of those attending, and should be based in the Graduate School, whenever feasible.

There will be three deadlines for application per year – 1 December, 1 March and 1 June.

Further information about the scheme can be found on the Graduate School website – www.reading.ac.uk/gs-studentledevents.aspx

Future editions of the Bulletin will feature some of the students and events supported by these schemes.
Communicating your research in an accessible and engaging way to a wider audience is a vital skill for PhD students. Images can provide an effective means of drawing attention to complex research projects, themes, and issues. The Graduate School's inaugural Research Images Competition attracted over 30 entries from across all Faculties and reflected the diversity of doctoral research at Reading. Subjects ranged from the interior of an Italian church to a close up of a microchip.

All the images were considered by the judging panel who shortlisted eight entries, these were then put on display in the Main Library. Visitors to the Library were asked to vote for their favourite image for the People's Choice Prize.

The competition winners were announced at a reception on 16 May held in the Graduate School. First Prize (£200) went to Christopher Ugbofe, whose entry, ‘Brain glue?’ showed an astrocyte (a type of brain cell).

Titus Nemeth was awarded the Runner-up Prize (£75) and the People's Choice Prize (£75) was won by Karolina Fieber.

All entries to the image competition are available to view via the Graduate School webpage: [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/events](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/events)
Well done, Anna!

Current maths PhD student Anna Watkins won a gold medal in the women’s double sculls race with her partner Katherine Grainger in the London 2012 Olympic Games. This means she now has two Olympic medals as she previously won a Bronze in Beijing.
Spotlight on confirmation of registration

Confirmation of registration is part of our monitoring of progress procedures. The process involves reviewing your work and progress to date to ensure that you are on track to complete your PhD successfully within the expected time period.

When does it happen?
For full-time students, confirmation of registration takes place in your second year before the end of your fifth term. For part-time students, it is normally carried out between 24 and 30 months from the start of your registration.

What will I have to do?
You will be required to write a report summarising
• your work to date
• your plans for the coming year (including any plans for publications)
• what subject-specific and generic research skills training you have undertaken
• other University-related work you have carried out

Who will be involved in the assessment?
Your supervisor/s will also be asked to submit a written report on your progress, plans, and training and to say whether they feel your progress has been satisfactory. These reports are then given to one or more ‘assessors’ (typically other members of academic staff in your School) who will decide whether you have made satisfactory progress.

Are there any specific criteria?
The six criteria used for assessing your report are listed in the Code of Practice on Research Students, which is available on the Graduate School website www.reading.ac.uk/gs-policies-and-procedures.aspx

Is there any further help or advice available?
Your School or Department will provide you with additional information about what is required. In addition, the Graduate School runs training sessions on preparing for Confirmation of Registration, as part of its Reading Researcher Development Programme. See Graduate School website www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/skillstrainingprogramme

Key advice from PhD students

We asked our third/final year PhD students, ‘What key piece of advice would you give yourself when starting out on your PhD?’ Here’s a selection of the responses.

‘Plan properly. If an experiment is planned well and properly organised then it actually saves time in the long-run and gives you a more clear path for future experiments’

‘Set yourself regular work hours, but don’t feel guilty about taking time off when you need it: the advice I remember most from starting out is to ensure you have a series of minor goals and reward yourself when you’ve completed them’

‘Immerse yourself, but don’t drown – you should of course go deeply into your area, but not at the expense of all else. Cultivate other activities outside your PhD, to give you perspective, and an outlet when things go wrong’
Coming up

Doctoral Researcher Conference

On 14 June 2013, we will be holding our first Doctoral Researcher Conference, to bring together research students and supervisors from across the University. In addition to a keynote speaker, the conference will feature a research poster exhibition (with associated competition), a Three-minute Thesis competition, and talks from our PhD Researcher of the Year and runners-up.

The poster competition has been set up to showcase the breadth of research being carried out by our doctoral researchers. The competition will be judged by a panel of academics, and the winner will receive £100.

The Three-minute Thesis competition is aimed at encouraging our PhD students to be able to describe their thesis in an engaging and succinct way – a skill that is invaluable in job interviews and when networking. Only one power-point slide is allowed, with no other props or use of electronic media. The winner will receive a £50 prize.

PhD Researcher of the Year

This new award has been established to recognise and celebrate excellence in postgraduate research. Each School will nominate one candidate for the award, along with a supporting case. Only third year students or equivalent part-time students who are studying for a PhD at the time of the call are eligible.

A judging panel will select a winner for each Faculty. These four individuals will be required to submit abstracts to describe their research, and the overall winner will be selected on the basis of these and the School nomination forms. The winners and runners up will present their work at the Doctoral Researcher Conference in June, with the overall winner being announced on the day and receiving a prize of £300. Further information will be announced on the Graduate School website.

Family fun for free

The average age of a PhD student is 31 years of age and many of our doctoral researchers have young children. Here is a selection of some family-friendly activities available to you on campus.

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)

MERL has been voted one of the best family-friendly museums in the country and houses collections reflecting all aspects of farming and the countryside. It offers a programme of events and activities for everyone: there are family workshops, guided tours, seminars and toddler sessions. Further information can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/merl

The Cole Museum of Zoology

The Animal and Microbial Sciences (AMS) building hosts the Cole Museum of Zoology. The highlights include skeletons of a male Indian Elephant, a Killer Whale and a five-metre Reticulated Python. Opening times are 9.30am – 4.30pm, Monday to Friday and admission is free. Further information is available at www.colemuseum.reading.ac.uk

Mystery & monster

Children’s Christmas Lecture 2012

The Children’s Christmas Lecture is for children aged between seven and twelve. It offers a fun and entertaining way to learn about some groundbreaking work going on at the University. This year’s lecture is on 17 December 2012 and entitled Mystery and Monsters: Exploring the power of Charles Dickens’ creative writing. To book your tickets, please contact events@reading.ac.uk