Welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of our Graduate School Bulletin. As I am writing this, it is pouring with rain outside, but hopefully summer will be here by the time you read this.

A lot has happened since the last edition of the Bulletin. At the end of the autumn term, we hosted our traditional Seasonal Celebration, with our annual quiz and Christmas jumper competition. We have recently run our popular Leadership Programme in collaboration with Henley Business School, which again received very positive feedback from participants. By the time this goes to print, we will have held our third annual Fairbrother Lecture presented by Sammie Buzzard, and you can read about this on the back page. We will also have hosted our ‘Keep calm you’re almost there’ tea for students who are writing up, and an event for our doctoral researchers who are lecturers in their home overseas institutions.

Following the introduction of Research Divisions and Themes in Reading, we have modified our PhD Researcher of the Year award so that selection now takes place across Research Divisions and Themes. Research Deans received nominations from each Division within their Theme, and selected an overall winner for each of the five Themes. These five Research Theme finalists will speak at this year’s annual Doctoral Research Conference on June 23. You can read about the Research Theme finalists in the pages which follow.

To close, we were delighted to be highly ranked for our support of international postgraduate research students in the latest International Student Barometer (ISB) survey run by i-graduate. We were ranked 2nd in the UK and 8th in the world, receiving a 96% satisfaction level overall.

Many thanks to all of our students who rated us so highly.

Professor Dianne Berry, Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies
STUDENT-LED EVENT

Stefano Santosossos, a third year doctoral researcher in Italian Studies, was awarded £400 from the Graduate School Student-led Events Fund to organise a conference entitled ‘Dante’s Comedy: the Living Text’. The aim of the event was to contribute to the worldwide celebration of the 750th anniversary of the birth of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri and to bring new focus to the study of Dante at the University of Reading.

Scholars from the universities of Edinburgh, Warwick and Salerno (Italy) were invited to the one-day event on 15 December 2015 to present their personal perspective on Dante’s masterpiece. Their reading and interpretation of Dante’s Comedy from a variety of backgrounds allowed the audience to actively participate in an open discussion and provided the opportunity to consider the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to research.

The event was preceded by a public performance of Dante’s verse by University of Reading students in the Palmer quad.

‘KEEP CALM YOU’RE ALMOST THERE’ TEA

On the 27 April, the Graduate School invited doctoral researchers who are due to submit their theses in 6-9 months to a ‘Keep calm you’re almost there’ afternoon tea. Students from across the University had some respite from the pressure of writing up and had the opportunity to chat and share ideas on how to keep the momentum going.

The Graduate School wishes everyone well during the writing up stage of their doctoral journey.

HENLEY CHALLENGE 2016

The annual Henley Challenge competition took place on Tuesday 23 February. This year’s theme was ‘Shape the future of business. What impact will your sector or field make in the next 70 years?’ Five finalists presented views on topics including the digital business ecosystem and the future of accounting and money. Uros Delivic, a first year International Business and Strategy PhD researcher, delivered the winning presentation on how the transformation of human capital could impact the future of multinational enterprises and economic development. He was presented with a cheque for £1000 to share with his chosen charities.

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH THEMES

What are the University’s Research Themes?

As part of its broader strategic planning, the University has structured its research around five broad themes:

- Environment
- Food
- Health
- Prosperity & Resilience
- Creativity & Heritage

These themes encompass our areas of existing strength and those the University intends to grow. They are felt to be a better way to raise the profile of our excellent research and to foster and facilitate interdisciplinary research, as well as to help us to prepare for the next REF assessment. Each theme is led by a Research Dean, who is an acknowledged expert in their field.

How do these themes relate to academic School and Departments?

Each theme is made up of a number of Research Divisions. Most Research Divisions either map on to a single School or Department (e.g. Law, History) or are part of a single School (e.g. Climate, Earth Observation, Weather all sit within Meteorology). Each division is primarily associated with one of the five themes but, in practice, is likely to contribute to the research of more than one theme. For example, law is a single Research Division that includes all research active staff in the School of Law and sits primarily under Prosperity & Resilience, but the research of some of its members might relate to the Health or Environment Theme.

Does this mean that my supervisors belong to a Research Division and a Research Theme?

Each member of research active academic staff has been allocated to a single Research Division, so each supervisor will be a member of one (and only one) Research Division. If your supervisors are from different Schools, then it is likely that they will be in different Research Divisions. Technically, you will be aligned with the Research Division of your primary supervisor but you would be free to attend seminars or other events associated with your second supervisor’s Research Division.

How will moving to this new structure affect postgraduate research at Reading?

In your day to day interactions with your supervisors, it won’t make a big difference. However, in time, as the different divisions and themes start to organise seminars, training sessions, and other events, we would expect that this will enrich the broader research environment for doctoral researchers. We also believe that showcasing our research excellence in this new way will help us to attract high quality PGR students to Reading. For each of our themes, we will be listing the potential PG research opportunities / projects, so that prospective students can see how their research fits into a broader research culture. We will also advertise specific studentships associated with particular themes.

I understand what Environment, Food, and Health broadly cover, but what about Prosperity & Resilience and Creativity & Heritage?

Prosperity & Resilience is concerned with creating and sustaining prosperity whilst also enabling resilience within our global economic system. It is about the most important challenges that our societies face, such as urbanisation, climate change, armed conflict, organised crime, corruption, equality, unemployment, and migration.

Heritage & Creativity is concerned with the ethics and values of heritage and culture, and how these relate to different audiences. It explores people’s sense of place and identity, as well as the business and economics of creativity.

I hear that the Research Themes are replacing Faculties, and that Faculties will no longer exist from next session— is that right?

From 1 August, the University will be moving to a new academic structure whereby Faculties will no longer exist. Within this new structure, Schools will be taking on many of the responsibilities previously owned by Faculties. At a higher level, research will be managed via Research Themes, and Teaching & Learning will be managed via subject groupings and cross-cutting activities. These changes mean that you will no longer belong to a Faculty. However, this does not affect your membership of your School / Department and the Graduate School, or your status in the University in any way.
PHD RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR – FINALISTS 2016

Lisa Schopohl
Prosperity and Resilience Research Theme
Henley Business School
Title of PhD: Essays on pension funds and responsible investment
Over the last decades pension funds and other large public asset owners have become a major force in global financial markets. These investors experience a constant struggle to meet their beneficiaries’ expectations regarding the financial and non-financial performance of their investments; environmental, social, governance (ESG) and ethical factors have been gaining importance for this investor group. In my research, I empirically analyse whether pension funds can balance both the financial and ethical demands of their beneficiaries and investigate potential drivers of pension funds’ preferences for socially responsible investment.

‘Doing a PhD is characterised by constant ups and downs. The secret is to enjoy the ups and push through the other times, knowing that even small steps or “apparent” dead ends all contribute to the final result.’

Vaibhav Singh
Heritage and Creativity Research Theme
School of Arts and Communication Design
Title of PhD: Devanagari type in the twentieth century: motivations, imperatives, technology, and the design process
My doctoral research investigates the design process for Indian typefaces across the twentieth century, examining factors that shaped textual communication in India through a period of momentous technological change. Focusing on Devanagari, a script used for over 100 languages, with direct impact on more than 500 million people, the research aims to critically re-evaluate the historical framework of design and technology that enabled typesetting and printing in Indian languages up to the digital age.

‘My biggest challenge has been to find effective ways to communicate the wider relevance of my research, and to integrate a diversity of perspectives within it.’

Faith Orchard
Health Research Theme
School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences
Title of PhD: The clinical characteristics and cognitive biases associated with adolescent depression
My area of research is adolescent depression. Adolescence is a distinct phase of development, with a high incidence of depression. Despite this, adolescent depression has been neglected by researchers and treatment is largely based on adult research. The aim of the five papers in my thesis is to describe and understand characteristics of depressed adolescents that could be addressed in psychological treatment. These specifically relate to clinical presentation and cognitive biases.

‘When you first embark on a PhD, it is possible to feel样 alone and not up to the job…but it is important to remember that everybody feels like this at times.’

Joanna Baker
Environment Research Theme
School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy
Title of PhD: Rocket science: Phytochemical, postharvest, shelf-life and sensory attributes of rocket species
I study rocket salad species in the context of the commercial food chain. My work relates to several aspects of rocket diversity, including genetics, phytochemistry, sensory science, consumer acceptance, and impacts of the supply chain. Rocket contains numerous health-beneficial compounds, such as isothiocyanates (ITCs) and flavonoids. The objective of my research is to identify chemical indicators in rocket that are important for human health and consumer acceptance. Through understanding the chemical components of leaves, the aim is to ultimately produce new rocket varieties with nutritive and sensorially enhanced properties that will benefit long term human health.

‘Learning to strike a balance between healthy scepticism and confidence in my own abilities has been (and still is) quite a challenge.’

Luke Bell
Food Research Theme
School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy
Title of PhD: Integrating extinct and extant diversity into macro-evolutionary analyses
My area of research is broad in scope, though is focused on characterizing patterns and processes of how morphology has changed over time among different groups of animals. This includes detecting body size trends in planktonic microorganisms and mammals all the way to inferring how natural selection has acted on anatomical features associated with distinct behaviours such as flight in dinosaurs or cooking in hominins.

‘A PhD takes perseverance, commitment and resilience. Research is incredibly competitive, but the hard work pays off. I feel incredibly lucky to do what I do.’
Karina was awarded first prize for her short story, 'The Anecdotologist'. You can read Karina’s winning story on the FindAPhD website: www.findaphd.com/funding/postgraduate-phd-scholarships/2015-scholarships-winners.aspx

**PHD PLUS PROGRAMME FOR OVERSEAS LECTURERS**

From the start of the next academic year, the Graduate School is introducing the new PHD Plus Programme for doctoral researchers who are lecturers/senior lecturers in their home overseas institution.

This enhancement programme will enable students to learn about the UK Higher Education system and to improve their teaching skills whilst studying for a PhD. The aim of the programme is to attract new students to Reading whilst in the short term offering the programme to existing students. The programme offers:

- the opportunity to participate in a bespoke Academic Teaching Mentoring Scheme, whereby for one term students shadow, and receive mentoring from, a senior member of teaching staff as he or she designs, delivers and reviews a number of teaching sessions. At the end of the term, participants come together to deliver practice teaching sessions, with feedback from programme mentors.

A guaranteed place on our Preparing to Teach programme.

Additional training sessions (specific to overseas lecturers) on:

- designing, preparing and delivering successful lectures
- Academic English and academic cultures

**TRAVEL BURSARY SCHEME VISIT TO MALAYSIA**

Hanis Nadia Yahya, a third year doctoral researcher in Food and Nutritional Sciences, was awarded a £100 travel bursary to support her attendance at the 2nd International Conference on Crop Improvement (ICCI) on 2–3 December 2015 in Malaysia. Her PhD project is identifying bacterial and fungal contamination of leafy salads throughout the supply chain.

Here is her post award report:

'The ICCI conference theme this year was ‘Sustainability through leading edge technology’. The conference aimed to showcase the latest technologies in the biosciences field to address critical issues for agriculture sustainability. I was among five speakers who delivered an oral presentation in the Crop Quality and Sustainability session on day two of the conference. My talk entitled 'Microbial population in ready-to-eat rocket salad exposed to varying handling procedure and storage temperature', was well received. The conference was a huge success and it provided a platform for the exchange of ideas between university and industry delegates to make connections to improve crop quality. It also provided an excellent opportunity for me to present my findings, improve my presentation skills, discuss collaborations with related research groups and hear about other similar research activity.'

Further information about the Travel Bursary Scheme can be found on the Graduate School website: www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/travelsubsary.aspx

**IMPORTANT STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW**

The Graduate School has compiled a webpage outlining important stuff you need to know during the course of your doctoral studies. This provides a brief summary and further links to key information you should be aware of as a doctoral researcher at Reading. It includes information on topics such as copyright, research ethics, open access and electronic deposition of your thesis.

www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-importantstuff.aspx
FAIRBROTHER LECTURE
‘A slippery situation: melting ice in Antarctica’

Sammie Buzzard
(PhD Researcher, Department of Meteorology)

On Wednesday 4 May, Sammie Buzzard delivered the annual Graduate School Fairbrother Public Lecture in the Henley Business School. Sammie’s engaging talk was based on her doctoral research into the melting of ice shelves in Antarctica, focusing on the role of lakes of melted ice found on the surface of some ice shelves. In her talk, Sammie was able to demonstrate that by using mathematical modelling, her research can better help us better predict the speed and occurrence at which these ice shelves will continue to melt and possibly fracture.

Sammie’s talk also highlighted the challenges of undertaking research into the Polar Regions and was accompanied by some amazing slides illustrating fieldwork hazards such as polar bears and snow-filled tents!

Sammie undertook her BSc and Master’s in Maths at the University of Exeter and came to Reading to undertake her doctorate under the supervision of Professor Danny Feltham and Dr Dani Flocco in the Department of Meteorology.

Sammie’s doctorate was funded by a Natural Environment Research Council studentship and during the course of her studies she also undertook a Research Council Policy Internship at the Government Office for Science.

During the post-lecture reception, audience members were able discover more about the diverse range of doctoral research taking place at Reading. Five outstanding recent doctoral researchers took part in a research display which showcased work in the areas of: medieval history; moral philosophy; child & teenage mental health; personalised nutrition; cybernetics and the body’s senses.

The Fairbrother Lecture was itself established to bring to wider attention the quality and scope of postgraduate research taking place at Reading. The lecture is named after Jack Fairbrother, who was the University’s first PhD graduate in 1929. Information regarding the 2017 Fairbrother Lecture will be available in the next academic year.

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