Welcome to the Winter edition of our Graduate School Bulletin, and particularly to all our new students who have joined us this autumn.

Since the last edition of this Bulletin, the Graduate School held its fifth annual Doctoral Research Conference, which was again a highly successful and well-attended event; you can read about the conference competitions winners in the pages that follow. You can also read about two of our previous PhD Researcher of the Year Research Theme winners who have both been successful in winning prestigious awards.

The Graduate School has seen a number of staffing changes over the past few months, with the main one being the departure of Chris Robson who had been with us since the Graduate School was first established in 2011, and the arrival of Dr Elena Bedisti, our new Director of Graduate School Services, who has joined us from University College London. Elena gained her doctorate (in linguistics) from Reading in 2005, and has previously worked in the University’s Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning (CDoTL) from 2006 to 2010.

Our annual seasonal celebration took place on 6 December and featured the ever popular quiz and Christmas jumper competition. How about treating yourself to a Graduate School hoodie, now on sale from Helen Apted in G10? They are just what you need for the coming winter days.

Looking to the new year, our annual Fairbrother Lecture will be taking place on 21 March. This year’s speaker is Rodrigo Zenun Franco who is undertaking a PhD in Computer Science. Rodrigo will be discussing his work developing an online system which can deliver personalised nutrition advice. In addition to the selected speaker, we will again be showcasing the work of several of our other doctoral researchers who are engaging in highly relevant and impactful research.

Professor Dianne Berry, Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies
NEWS

TRAVEL BURSARY SCHEME

Visit to USA
Hiroshi Nakatani, a third year doctoral researcher in the Department of Politics and International Relations, was awarded a travel bursary towards a month long archival visit to the National Archives at College Park, Maryland and the Lyndon Johnson Library, Texas. His PhD project is on the development, via political and diplomatic negotiations, of US extended nuclear deterrence in Western Europe and Japan between 1950 and 1970.

Post award report
‘Overall my research trip was successful for three reasons. First and foremost I successfully collected the key government documents essential for my PhD thesis. My thesis will now be supported by the original documents rather than referencing other researchers’ work. Secondly, I managed to meet an expert in my field who provided some useful research tips and introduced me to another researcher, providing me with the unique chance to expand my research network. Finally, travelling alone for a month in a foreign country has greatly bolstered my confidence. I now know how to plan a research trip and use the National Archives. This may seem a less important skill, but when I have to take another research trip I now know exactly what to do and how to do it, which will save me a great deal of time.’

Further details of the Travel Bursary Scheme can be found on the Graduate School website: reading.ac.uk/graduateschool

SUMMER GRADUATION

Earlier this year, the Graduate School had a stand at the summer Graduation Ceremonies at the London Road Campus. Graduate School staff had the opportunity to congratulate doctoral researchers on their success and to give them a small memento of their time studying at Reading. A lucky few even managed to get a photo with Professor Dianne Berry, Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies, in her academic robes.

HENLEY DBA 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Henley Business School’s part-time Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme is now in its 25th successful year. Amongst the first in the UK to launch the DBA, Henley has been proud to welcome participants from around 60 countries and from a wide variety of disciplines. A number of Henley’s DBA graduates have been recognised in the Queen’s Honours lists and others have published books and taught on international programmes, sharing their expertise with a wider audience.

This summer, more than thirty DBA graduates joined current doctoral researchers for a special 25th Anniversary Research Colloquium at the Henley Business School.

Dr Claire Collins, Director of the DBA Programme stated: ‘The event was a very special occasion, a real time to celebrate – it is not often that a programme can reach such a milestone and that so many DBA graduates have the opportunity to meet up and share their expertise and knowledge at such a high level.’
RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

The human brain is described as the most complex object in the universe. However, the complexity of brain processes and the specialist academic language which is used to describe them, make the cutting edge findings of brain research inaccessible to the general public. Dr Ioannis Zoulias, a former Three Minute Thesis competition winner (2016), has been working alongside doctoral researchers Orla Margaret Fannon and Maitreyee Niteen Wairagkar to make brain research accessible to a wider audience. They have developed a set of interactive demonstrations, which have been presented in various public events and school presentations*, to communicate research on neuroscience, electrophysiology and biomedical rehabilitation. Earlier this year, local school children aged 8 - 12 years took part in interactive presentations introducing the electrical signals within our brains and how to harness them to control a computer game. Previous demonstrations have taken place at the Science Museum, London and the Royal Institute, London.

This work, in collaboration with Dr Mark Dallas, was selected as a finalist in the inaugural 2017 University of Reading, Research Engagement and Impact awards in the Embark category. This competition was established to showcase research that creates an impact in society.

Ioannis Zoulias remains at Reading as a postdoctoral Research Assistant in the Department of Biomedical Engineering.

* School outreach events have been supported by current doctoral researchers Harry Fonseca Williams, Catriona Scrivener, Harry Eberle, Ines Serra and Yuhan Hu.

QUESTION: ESSAYS AND ART FROM THE HUMANITIES

The AHRC South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (SWW DTP) has launched a new journal entitled Question: Essays and Art from the Humanities.

This journal, designed for a mainstream non-specialist audience, will be produced twice a year and will contain a selection of new essays, creative writing, art and research from early career academics. Contributors include historians, literary critics, playwrights, artists, archaeologists, poets, musicians, philosophers, scientists, lawyers and linguists from universities around the UK.

Gareth Mills, a second year doctoral researcher, Department of English Literature, and General Editor developed the journal alongside Bristol-based Co-editor Tabitha Stanmore. Gareth described the publication as ‘an exciting new outlet for academic research and art. We hope that Question will not only be a medium for academic principles such as integrity, fair debate and evidential reasoning to play a role in public discussion, but that the interdisciplinary nature of the journal will also help us communicate better with each other. We’re grateful to the SWW DTP for giving us the opportunity to make these connections.’

In addition to the print journal, Question’s website can be found at www.questionjournal.com. The website will host a lively blog run by the editorial staff, as well as offering a chance for the public to challenge, comment or contribute to any of the articles produced.
Delegates were inspired to hear a talk from Dr Tom Pey, Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Blind Children, who spoke about undertaking a PhD after losing his sight at the age of 39 years. His key to success was ensuring that he had a good team of people around him who were experts in their field who could support him during his doctoral studies.

Each of the five PhD Researcher of the Year (ROY) finalists gave a short presentation, outlining their research and experience of studying at Reading. Max Brockman-Byrne, School of Law, who was representing the Prosperity and Resilience Theme was announced the overall winner and presented with the PhD ROY award from Professor Steve Mithen, Deputy Vice-Chancellor. His research considered the problematic interaction between international law and the use of armed drones by states. Max is now a lecturer in Law at the University of Lincoln and hopes to build upon the research training that he received during his doctoral studies.

You can watch interviews of each of the five PhD ROY Finalists at: www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/events/PhD-Researcher-of-the-Year-Finalists-2017.aspx

Ten finalists, selected from heats undertaken earlier in the year, wowed the audience with their pithy Three Minute Thesis (3MT) talks. Oliver Wilson, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science, won first prize with his talk entitled ‘Lessons from the fossil pollen time machine: how past people and climate change shaped Brazil’s Araucaria forests.’ Oliver represented the University at the national VITAE 3MT competition where his talk made it through to the semi-finals — well done Oliver! The People’s Choice Award was won by Louise Amal, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science, for her talk ‘If I told you your home would flood next winter, would you believe me?’

You can watch Oliver’s 3MT talk on the Graduate School website.

Thirty-nine posters were on display in the Research Poster competition. A judging panel awarded first prize to Katy Whitaker, School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science, for her research poster ‘Where did the Whiteknights sarsen stones come from?’ The People’s Choice Award was won by Nick Holley, School of the Built Environment, for his poster entitled ‘In absentia: a dialogue between construction reform and heterogeneous clients.’

The Research Life in Pictures competition was introduced this year for doctoral researchers to submit a picture that offers an insight into
their everyday life. First prize was awarded to James Lloyd, School of Humanities, for a picture entitled ‘Steps and mountains.’ Shamsa Mas’oud Nasser Al Shebani, School of Politics, Economics and International Relations, was the People’s Choice Award winner for ‘Hanging wonders of Reading.’

Eight research images were shortlisted for the Research Image competition. First prize, chosen by our judging panel, went to Orla M. Fannon, School of Biological Sciences, for her image ‘Creating networks in a petri dish’. She also went onto win the People’s Choice Award voted for by conference delegates.

To close the fifth anniversary conference, a team of doctoral researchers took on a team of University staff in the very first Graduate School Challenge Quiz. Professor Steve Mithen, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, acted as Quiz Master in this fun fast-paced quiz. The student team ‘King Learners’ won 22:15 although they may have been aided by faster, more responsive buzzers!

Conference films, can be viewed on the Graduate School website.

Save the date! Next year’s Doctoral Research Conference will take place on 20 June 2018.
Joanna Baker, a former PhD Researcher of the Year 2016 finalist, was awarded her doctorate in Biological Sciences in January 2017. Her research was motivated by the desire to understand how biological diversity arises and during her doctoral studies she demonstrated that mammals evolve preferentially towards larger sizes over time. She also studied diverse animal groups to show innovation during historical evolution, such as how arms started to become wings in the earliest flying dinosaurs.

**Q** Why did you select Reading for your PhD?

**A** I would have been mad not to accept a studentship at Reading as the University is home to a world-leading centre for statistical phylogenetic methods including those studying rates of biological evolution (within the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Division). This group has an excellent track record for developing and applying approaches for detecting natural selection.

**Q** What advice would you give a new first year?

**A** My biggest challenges during my PhD were probably much the same as everybody else’s. It is really very easy to feel completely overwhelmed and lost when you are so focused on a narrow area of research. Everybody feels like they can’t do it, almost all of the time. It is okay to be wrong – I would wager that I get things wrong at least 90% of the time. It is when you get things right after a long struggle that you know you really have achieved something - so embrace the failures and learn from them!

**Q** What have you been doing since you were awarded your PhD?

**A** I spent some time writing applications for research fellowships alongside writing up some of my thesis chapters for publication. I have since submitted one manuscript for publication, with a second on its way in the near future. In September 2017 I was awarded an Early Career Fellowship with the Leverhulme Trust looking to expand my PhD research. The proposed project will launch my research from one solely looking at morphological evolution into a new molecular dimension. This untrodden ground will allow me to establish my independence as a researcher whilst still harnessing my previous knowledge and experiences.

Being involved with other research going on at the University allowed me to take steps along the path towards a successful future career in academia.

**Q** Was there anything you did at Reading that you feel has helped you in your new position?

**A** Being involved with other research going on at the University allowed me to take steps along the path towards a successful future career in academia. I have also been involved in collaborative projects involving colleagues spanning many countries and institutions. Several of these projects are still ongoing and I hope to maintain a wide network of contacts and independent collaborations. These doors aren’t opened by themselves, so I think communication with colleagues and discussions of ideas and opportunities – even if it is over coffees and lunches – is the most important thing I did to help me along my way. The CV building, presentation skills and general skill building workshops provided by the Graduate School’s Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) were not only helpful but a necessary part of PhD life and helped me to become a fully rounded researcher.
Lisa Schopohl, a former PhD Researcher of the Year 2016 finalist, has been awarded joint winner of the FIR-PRI Finance and Sustainability Award for her PhD thesis ‘Essays on Institutional Investment and Socially Responsible Investing.’ The French Sustainable Investment Forum (FIR) in collaboration with the UN-backed Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) aims to promote practically relevant academic research and broader disciplinary development of responsible investment scholarship.

The aim of Lisa’s PhD was to analyse why and how large institutional investors incorporate environmental, social and ethical considerations into their investment practices and her research relates their responsible investment approaches to the demands of their ultimate beneficiaries.

Lisa was invited to deliver a research paper at the PRI Academic Network conference in Berlin on 26-27 September 2017 where she was presented with her award and a prize of €5,000.

I’m delighted that my research has won this prestigious award and I’m happy that I can continue and build on the research from my PhD in my role as a lecturer at the ICMA Centre.

FANTASTIC BOOKS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Evan Hayles Gledhill is a doctoral researcher in the Department of English Literature and is also employed by the British Library. Evan recently helped run a Discovery session at the Library focused on its holdings of magical texts.

“The British Library has a fantastic reference and support service that too few scholars know about. Not only do they answer enquiries about the collection materials held on site, but also guide library users and general enquirers to external resources. I have been working in this role whilst completing my PhD at Reading, and part of my job is to facilitate 1-2-1 sessions for researchers to help them navigate the collections most relevant to their research, and to run topical discovery sessions.

On Halloween, I ran a Discovery session themed around magical texts, tying into our promotion of the History of Magic Exhibition. Attendees got an overview of some of the magical books the Library holds – from ancient Egyptian papyrus that tell of spells to summon demons, to medieval grimoirs, to the cheap pulp guides to getting rich and powerful through magic. The session was geared towards the attendees’ own interests, which were varied; one was studying the history of the book, another was a journalist! The feedback from the session was that it was ‘engaging and extremely helpful.’

So if you’re about to start a new area of research, or just want to see what the library holds, check out the British Library’s free research sessions and take a look at the help references services can provide, online and off.”

THE SPRINT PROGRAMME

Earlier this summer twenty Reading doctoral researchers participated in the Graduate School’s first ever SPRINT programme.

SPRINT is an external training programme modelled on the well-known Springboard women’s development programme. Over four one-day workshops, SPRINT encourages women to take stock of their goals, aspirations and values and reflect on how these are enacted in their work and personal lives. The course was carefully tailored to PhD student journeys by an experienced external trainer, Chris Cross, and included input from speakers Professor Ellie Highwood, Professor Parveen Yaqoob and Professor Helen Bilton.

The doctoral researchers who attended were from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, career stages and research areas.

The Graduate School hopes to offer SPRINT again in Spring 2018.
NEW GRADUATE SCHOOL HOODIES

Why not stand out from the undergraduate crowd in a new University of Reading Graduate School hoodie?

Graduate School hoodies can now be purchased from the Graduate School office. These navy blue hoodies are available in XS / S / M / L sizes and have the University of Reading logo embroidered on the front chest and Graduate School written on the back in white lettering.

If you would like to buy one, please bring £25 (cash only) to the Graduate School office, Old Whiteknights House.

INFORMATION
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