The start of a new academic session always seems an exciting time of year, particularly as we welcome a new cohort of research students. It is now three years since the Graduate School came into being, and we have certainly achieved a lot in that time.

I am proud to announce that our Graduate School was rated third highest in the UK in terms of student satisfaction in the most recent International Student Barometer (ISB). This year, we are looking at what more we can do to support students who are experiencing difficulties either with their studies or with their personal lives, and also what we can do to support students who have families here with them. Keep a look out on our website for updates.

Since the last edition of this Bulletin, we held our second annual Doctoral Research Conference which was a great success and attracted around 350 research students, as well as a good number of staff. You can read more about the event, and the winners of the associated competitions, in the pages which follow. Next term we will have our second Fairbrother Public Lecture and we have selected Nadya Ali, a current doctoral researcher from the Department of Politics and International Relations, for this important event. We received a good number of nominations from across the University, which reflects how many of our students are carrying out exciting, impactful research which is of interest to the wider public.

During the previous session, we reviewed how we support research students who undertake teaching duties within their Schools, and our new Preparing to Teach Programme has begun. This programme sits alongside our Leadership Programme and our extensive Reading Researcher Development Programme, which this academic year includes the new sessions, ‘Brand You’ and ‘Working with the Media’. Next term, we will be running a number of sessions to help our research students find out more about potential non-academic careers.

There is much more information about upcoming events and competitions, and about what our students have been up to over the past year, inside this Bulletin. I very much hope that you enjoy reading it.

Professor Dianne Berry, Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies
TRAVEL BURSARY SCHEME
Visit to Lille, France

João Mello Santos de Barros, a third year doctoral researcher from the School of Pharmacy, was awarded £300 to attend the 10th European Symposium on Biochemical Engineering Sciences (ESBES) on 7-10 September in Lille, France. He presented a paper on his latest findings entitled ‘Oral live bacterial vaccine formulation.’

‘My attendance at this conference was a great opportunity to hear top experts talking about their work and motivations, to learn what other research groups are doing, and to participate in active discussions which will hopefully inspire my future research ideas. I enjoyed the social and engaging environment surrounding the conference and I am sure that the scientific and social networks created during lunch and coffee breaks will be very useful in the future. I had the opportunity to present my work to a large audience and it was rewarding to understand that my research is interesting to my peers and my talk led to questions of both a technical and ‘general curiosity’ nature. I believe that this conference was a success and it has boosted my motivation to work and deliver good research.’

Information about the Travel Bursary Scheme can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/gs-travelbursary.aspx

STUDENT-LED EVENT
Nutrition Research Group Conference

Alice Turner, a third year doctoral researcher in the Department of Food & Nutritional Sciences, was awarded £200 to organise a Nutrition Research Group (NRG) Conference on 23 June 2014. The aim of the conference was to bring together Nutrition Research Group members to discuss new findings, broaden their knowledge base and to provide a unique opportunity to exchange ideas.

Thirty doctoral researchers attended the event and presented their research to a large audience consisting of fellow doctoral researchers and supervisors. First year doctoral researchers gave a three minute presentation with one slide to describe their research, second years presented a research poster and third year doctoral researchers delivered a 10 minute presentation. Presentations covered a wide range of nutrition related topics including the relationship between diet and disease risk. Prizes were awarded to the best presentation/poster in each year group. The conference was a huge success and was both a valuable learning experience and networking event for the presenters and delegates.

Alice stated, ‘I benefited greatly from the experience as it allowed me to improve my organisational and event management skills, whilst developing my communication abilities when working as part of the Organising Committee. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and hope to organise something similar in the future.’

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

THE THREADNEEDLE PRIZE
FROM REGIONAL TO NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In summer 2014, Tina Jenkins was one of several candidates awarded a Regional PhD Bursary under a scheme set up to enable high quality candidates living within the immediate region to undertake a PhD at Reading. Shortly after she started her PhD in Fine Art in late September 2014, Tina was awarded the prestigious Threadneedle Prize for her mixed media work, ‘Bed Head’. The prize, one of the largest art prizes in the UK, is awarded annually for figurative and representational art.

The Graduate School spoke to Tina to find out more about her journey from Reading to the national prize.

Organising Committee (from left to right) Anna Macready, Kumari Rathnayake, Michelle Weech, Dafni Vasilopoulou, Rosalind Fallize and Alice Turner

What is your connection with the region?

I was brought up in Woodcote originally and have lived in the region for a number of years. My husband was connected with the University Graduate Club and through that I came to be aware there was a University here. I had originally wanted to study fashion and photography after I left school but wasn’t able to finance it at the time. It was only once I’d had my children and a family connection with the University that the thought of studying at Reading came up.

I did my undergraduate study here and have just finished my Master of Fine Arts (MFA). I’ve also taught in the Department of Art. I had always kept in working contact with the Department even when not studying here and, for the last two years, I’ve lectured on the Fine Art International Foundation Programme, which involves intense one-to-one work with new international students.

In the future, I want to continue my practice and teaching. I find the teaching stimulating, and students often ask questions that you forget to ask yourself. The conversations that you can have at the University make it a really inspiring environment to be in. I could function purely as an artist but it’s a lot more beneficial to my practice to be in a University environment. I also have access to expertise and materials in other disciplines such as Psychology and Philosophy, a stimulation you don’t have at institutions which focus exclusively on art.

What do you plan to do after your PhD?

I want to continue both my practice and teaching. I find the teaching stimulating, and students often ask questions that you forget to ask yourself. The conversations that you can have at the University make it a really inspiring environment to be in. I could function purely as an artist but it’s a lot more beneficial to my practice to be in a University environment. I also have access to expertise and materials in other disciplines such as Psychology and Philosophy, a stimulation you don’t have at institutions which focus exclusively on art.

Can you tell us about the research that your PhD will involve?

I’m looking at the subjective space of painting: somewhere between analysing painting and using painting to analyse yourself. I’m looking at that in terms of how artists make marks and why certain marks are repeated. I’ll be researching Freudian and Lacanian terms of hysteria in my work, which is practice-based.

What do you plan to do after your PhD?

I want to continue both my practice and teaching. I find the teaching stimulating, and students often ask questions that you forget to ask yourself. The conversations that you can have at the University make it a really inspiring environment to be in. I could function purely as an artist but it’s a lot more beneficial to my practice to be in a University environment. I also have access to expertise and materials in other disciplines such as Psychology and Philosophy, a stimulation you don’t have at institutions which focus exclusively on art.

Was Reading the obvious choice for your research?

Yes, a lot of the tutors in my department have relevant expertise. With John Russell having done a lot of research on Irving and Rachel Garfield having researched Lacan, I have supervision from a team of researchers I wanted to work in different areas.

Has winning a large national Prize such as the Threadneedle Prize brought obligations?

I wasn’t expecting to win the prize so I wasn’t prepared for it. There have been a lot more opportunities and the last few weeks have been manic with requests. I’m looking forward to getting back to my research but it’s been great. I’ve got a solo show with Threadneedle at the Mall Galleries (central London) in March 2015 so I’ve got the pressure of preparing work for that and showing I can follow it up but it’s fun. I’ve already signed up for RRDP sessions on ‘Stress-busting’ and ‘Developing professional researcher networks’ as it is good to learn from the experience of others!

Further information on Tina Jenkins’ work:
www.saatchiart.com/tinajenkins

Further information on the University’s Regional PhD Bursaries:
www.reading.ac.uk/gs-regionalphdbursary.aspx
The Graduate School hosted its second annual Doctoral Research Conference on 1 July. 350 doctoral researchers from across the University congregated in the Palmer Building to watch the PhD Researcher of the Year presentations, Three Minute Thesis Competition and Science SLAM presentation and view the Research Poster and Research Image Competition Displays.

The PhD Researcher of the Year (ROY) Competition featured presentations by the four Faculty winners outlining their research and experience at Reading. Birte Julia Gippert, School of Politics, Economics and International Relations was the overall winner and was presented the PhD ROY award from the Vice-Chancellor. Sir David Bell. Birte’s presentation gave an overview of her doctoral research which involves the study of states that have gone through periods of internal war or violent conflict and how they can be supported externally after such experiences. Since winning PhD Researcher of the Year, Birte has been awarded runner-up in the International Studies Association’s ISA Kenneth Boulding Award. This Award is given annually to the graduate student who has delivered the best peace research paper at the most recent ISA meetings. Birte will be presented with her award at a ceremony at the ISA annual convention in New Orleans, in spring 2015.

Thirty posters were displayed as part of the Research Poster Competition. This aim of this competition is to allow participants to communicate their research, raise the profile of their research and to prepare them for presenting at external conferences. Jacob Bishop’s poster entitled ‘Pollinators: a buffer against climate-driven yield loss?’ won first prize. This is the second year in a row, that the winning poster has been submitted by a doctoral researcher from the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. Is there no stopping them?

Our audience gave a particularly warm welcome to Charlotte Hill, School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy, the winner of Reading’s inaugural Science SLAM competition. Slammers have to present their area of research in six minutes using props, costumes and audience participation but not PowerPoint slides. With the use of wooden claves and a willing audience, Charlotte clearly demonstrated how cannabis can treat the epileptic brain in a fun and engaging way.

Sixteen finalists, selected from heats conducted earlier in the year, competed in front of our conference audience for the title of Three Minute Thesis Champion 2014. Chosen by our Judging Panel, the winner, Sarah Mitchell, Marketing and Reputation, Henley Business School, received first prize for her presentation ‘Exploring the role of brand in volunteer choice of charity’. Shamala Sundaray, from the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, won the People’s Choice Award voted for by conference delegates for her presentation entitled ‘Last scene: sans communication?’

New within the conference programme this year was the Research Image Competition. Doctoral researchers had to provide an insight into their research project using an eye catching, intriguing image with an accompanying short description. Eight images were displayed in the Palmer Foyer. Tom Webb, School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences won both the Judges’ and the People’s Choice Award for his research image entitled ‘There’s something in the air’.

Find out more about the Doctoral Research Conference, including videos of the winning presentations at http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/graduate-school/doctoral-research-conference-2014
PREPARING TO TEACH

The Preparing to Teach Programme has been designed to support doctoral researchers who contribute to teaching and learning activities across the University. This includes assisting in laboratory or computer classes, demonstrating, running problem solving sessions, taking tutorial classes or seminars, giving lectures, performing assessments and providing feedback. The programme will run in the autumn and spring term of each academic year and will be delivered by the Centre for Quality Support and Development (CQSD).

Full details of the programme and how to book can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/graduateschool/Preparing_to_Teach_Brochure_final.pdf

A PROFessional DOCTORate...

but what comes next?

Marek Kubik graduated from the University this summer with an Engineering Doctorate (EngD), from the Technologies for Sustainable Built Environments (TSBE) Centre. The TSBE is an Industrial Doctoral Training Centre for construction technology, climate and business enterprise research and was established in 2009 with a £6 million grant from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Marek followed a four-year programme instead of the traditional three-year PhD. What was to be sponsored by AES, a global power company, supported by two academic supervisors and spent a significant amount of time based in industry.

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to a new 1st year doctoral researcher?

My first piece of advice is to publish early. Publishing international conference papers and journal papers helps hone your writing ability and gives you material that can be readily dropped into your thesis. Second, plan ahead. Your time shoots by and you need to have as much flexibility to work in an area and to really think about how to solve the challenges you face.

And finally, where do you want to be in 5 years?

I would like to be in a position where I can look back and be proud of delivering the change urgently needed in the energy sector. I want to see ‘us’ on a trajectory of avoiding catastrophic climate change and relieving energy poverty where it exists.
COMING UP

SEASONAL CELEBRATION

On Wednesday 3 December, 17:00–19:00, the Graduate School will be holding its Seasonal Celebration. At this annual event, doctoral researchers get the chance to test their general knowledge with the ever-popular Graduate School quiz and enjoy some mulled wine and mince pies. All students will be emailed directly with further details.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME 2015
Graduate School & Henley Business School

Now in its third year, the Graduate School’s Leadership Programme, ‘Making a difference as a leader – developing your leadership potential’ is now open for applications. Taking place at both the Greenlands and Whiteknights campuses, this three-day (9, 10 & 24 February 2015) intensive programme is led by Dr Claire Collins and Dr Bernd Vogel from the Henley Business School and has been designed specifically for doctoral researchers. The aim of the programme is to help students, whatever their subject area or professional experience, to improve their understanding of leadership and to recognise the importance of leadership skills in relation to their own career ambitions. The programme is open to 2nd and 3rd year full-time and 3rd, 4th and 5th year part-time doctoral researchers.

For further information, eligibility criteria and to download an application form, go to: www.reading.ac.uk/Leadership_programme.aspx

Please note that the closing date for applications is Friday 12 December 2014.

FAIRBROTHER LECTURE 2015

After the success of the inaugural Fairbrother Lecture in May 2014, the Graduate School is delighted to announce that the 2015 lecture will be delivered by Nadya Ali, a doctoral researcher from the Department of Politics and International Relations.

Named after Jack Fairbrother, who in 1929 became the first student to be awarded a PhD from the University, the Fairbrother Lecture is an annual event at which a current, or recent, Reading doctoral researcher presents their work to a wider audience.

The lecture is entitled: ‘Governing Britain’s Muslims: how effective is counter-radicalisation?’ and will be based on Nadya Ali’s PhD research into the British Government’s current policies and strategies for combating radicalisation amongst British Muslims. The lecture touches on key political debates taking place in Britain today, and asks what are the limits of counter-radicalisation policies?

Further information can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/gs-fairbrotherlecture.aspx

Please note that all Graduate School events are listed in our 2014–15 schedule available at: www.reading.ac.uk/gs-events.aspx

GRADUATE SCHOOL BULLETIN

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