Over the summer, a number of students worked with members of staff on the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme. These are opportunities for students to become involved with the research work that members of the department are involved with.

Nadeem Hamza worked with Marina Della Giusta and James Reade looking at the incidence of hate crime in and around the EU Referendum in 2016, and Owen Gittings worked with Sarah Jewell and James Reade looking at economic dimensions of county cricket such as scheduling, managerial decisions and demand for the sport. Eleanor Partington, a maths student worked with Marina Della Giusta and James Reade thinking more about what we can learn about economic decision making and outcomes using the board game Settlers of Catan, and Tigran Sogomonian (linguistics), Holly Vincent and Nick Bolitho (both maths).

Matija Petrinjak, an ICMA student, worked with Sam Rawlings looking at how extensions to health insurance in China in recent years has affected child health.

All produced valuable work, contributing towards the research output of the department, which ranks 20th in the UK in a recently released set of league tables.

The scheme will run again next summer, and is for undergraduate students between their second and third years. Look out for information after Christmas about next year’s placements.

The Big Data Group (Giuseppe Di Fatta, James Reade, Sylvia Jaworska, Danica Vukadinovic-Greetham, Marina Della Giusta and Sarah Jewell) together with four UROP students (Holly Vincent and Nick Bolitho in Mathematics, Tigran Sogomonian in Linguistics and Hamza Nadeem in Economics), have used a large Twitter dataset during the referendum campaign alongside publicly available data from social surveys to address a set of issues:

- The (strong) language of Brexit The year 2016 has been declared the year of post-truth politics, in which appeals to emotions (pathos) superseded the significance of factual evidence-based information (logos) largely affecting people’s constructions and interpretations of events. This has been accompanied by the growing prominence of political ‘alt’ movements (e.g. UKIP, alt.right) and their aggressive, provocative and populist narratives. Social text-based media sites such as Twitter are seen as the key tools in the dissemination of this new rhetoric, We examine the expressions of affect (emotions) and evaluation (positive vs negative), specifically forms of ‘stronger’ language (verbal aggression, swearing) on Twitter in the run-up to the EU Referendum. We are particularly interested in the extent to which verbal aggression is spread on Twitter, who uses this kind of language and what the individual and collective mechanisms are that make such language dominant.

- The role of experts and official media in social media Are experts are using social media too little or in ways that make them less visible? We use social network analysis and use language analysis to understand whether experts use outdated language that makes them less relevant, and we assess the role of official and unofficial media in enhancing particular discourses.

- The role of trust in Brexit and voting generally. Has the basis for trust changed (from competence to deliver to something else-popularity?), or has trust become irrelevant as a
factor in voting decisions.
- Hate language and hate crime. Across the UK, 2016 has seen a rise in hate crime, with the EU referendum appearing to precipitate much of that increase. Can incidences of hate crime be predicted using social media? Do those considering committing crimes discuss associated issues using social media? Do they reveal (inadvertently or otherwise) information about their location in doing so?

The results of the project will be presented at a workshop on Friday 1 December (more details to follow).