

ISSUE 11

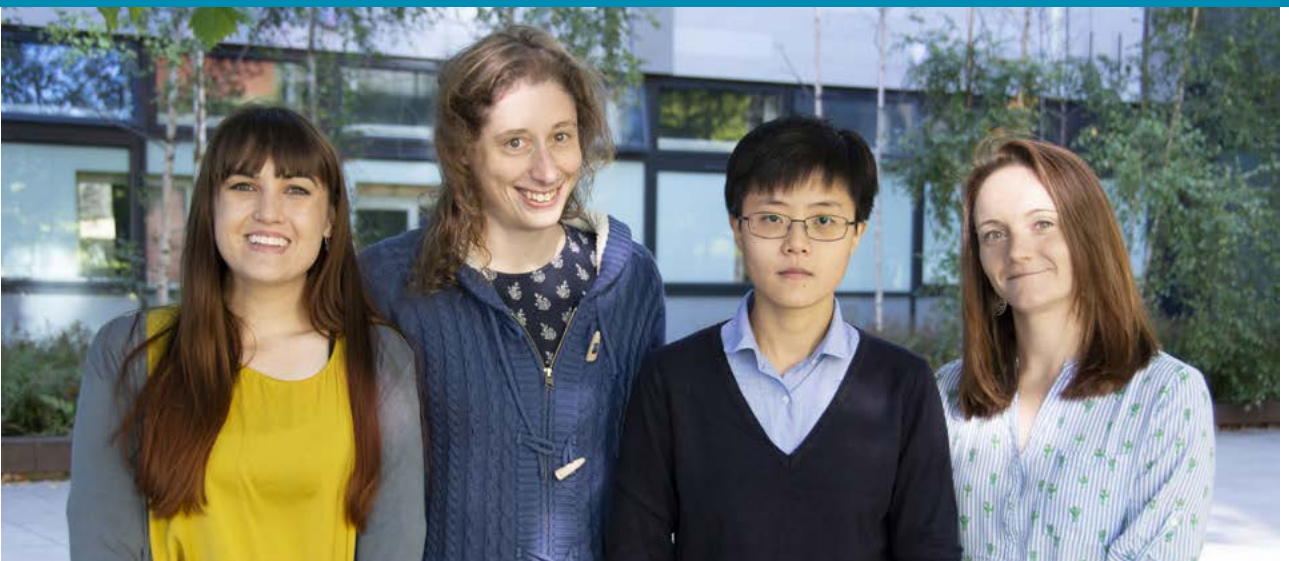
# GRADUATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter for the research student community



## *Onto a Winner*

Profiling the latest recipients of the Santander scholarships





# Contents



Graduate College Newsletter, the newsletter of the research student community at Oxford Brookes University.

Thank you to all students and staff who have contributed to this edition of the Newsletter.

The University accepts no responsibility for the content of any material in *Graduate College Newsletter*. Readers should note in particular that the inclusion of news and editorial items does not imply endorsement by the University of the matters reported of the views expressed.

We reserve the right to edit contributions before we publish and to refuse editorial items.

Co-ordinated and edited by the Research Degrees Team.

Designed by Communications Services, Oxford Brookes University.



- 3 News**  
All the latest from Graduate College and beyond
- 8 Onto a Winner**  
Profiling the latest recipients of the Santander scholarships
- 12 Research Student Profiles**  
Research student profiles from across the faculties
- 19 Spotlight on Research**  
Follow the research journey of one of Brookes' PhD students

Contributions are welcome from all sections of the University and should be sent to:  
[asa-gcnewsletter@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:asa-gcnewsletter@brookes.ac.uk)



# News



(Left) Ross Brooks outside Headington Hill Hall, home of the School of Law at Brookes. Oscar Wilde, an undergraduate at Magdalen College at the time, attended an all-night fancy dress party here on 1 May 1878.

## Oxford LGBTQ+ History Tour

Brookes' research student Ross Brooks, from the School of History, Philosophy and Culture, has developed a new city trail highlighting the history of LGBTQ+ in Oxford.

Ross has developed the *Queer Oxford* trail in conjunction with Richard Bruce Parkinson, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford and author of *A Little Gay History*.

The trail shares stories, voices, research and collections about Oxford's diverse but perhaps little-known LGBTQ+ history. Ross explained, "The trail highlights a few of the most significant aspects of Oxford's 600+ years of queer history. It ventures beyond the city's museums to encompass Oxford Town and Gown as a hub of LGBTQ+ life and culture, past and present. It showcases some notable people who have helped make Oxford one of the world's great queer localities, but also shows how LGBTQ+ history is embodied in a place in many forms, often in ways that are not always obvious."

The *Queer Oxford* trail is designed for the city's students, academics, visitors, residents and anyone with an interest in LGBTQ+ history and heritage. The trail is part of the University of Oxford's new web-app called Oxford Alternative Stories, developed by The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH). By creating a platform that celebrates the diverse and often untold stories of Oxford, TORCH supports research into these areas of study.

The Queer Oxford city trail web-app is inspired by the pioneering work of Richard Bruce Parkinson and its launch coincided with the British Museum touring exhibition at the Ashmolean – *No Offence: Exploring LGBTQ+ Histories*. The exhibition explored how same-sex desires, love and gender diversity have been expressed culturally throughout history.

Richard, who has been integral in foregrounding queer heritage in Britain's museums and academia, said, "Ross' trail is a revelation, and a timely reminder that LGBTQ+ history is all around us at a local level, if we know where to look. Fully equal rights are not quite with us yet, and this trail will help bring them closer by increasing public awareness of the sheer diversity of human desire that this city has seen across the centuries."

Ross has been researching Oxford's LGBTQ+ history since 2006. While studying his undergraduate degree at Oxford Brookes, he self-published the *Queer Oxford* hand-held city guide. Ross is now pursuing his PhD within the Centre for Medical Humanities at Brookes. His research project, entitled "*Evolution's Closet: The New Biology and Homosexuality in Britain, 1885-1967*" focuses on approaches adopted towards the subject of homosexuality by twentieth-century British biologists.

Ross tweets from @Queer\_Oxford and more information about Oxford's LGBTQ+ history can be found at [queeroxford.info](http://queeroxford.info)

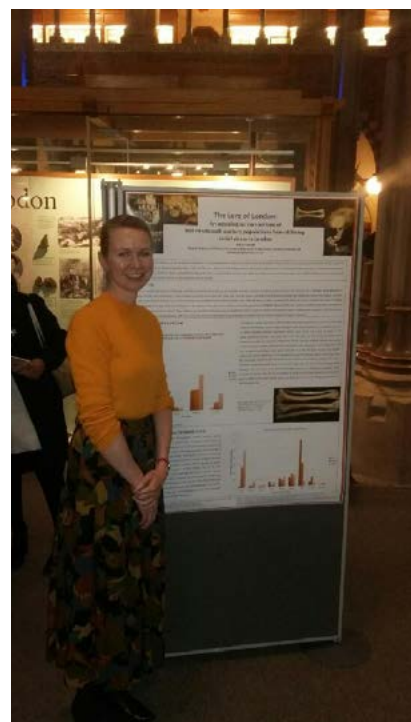
The city trail app can be viewed on any smartphone or tablet device via [oxfordstories.ox.ac.uk/torch](http://oxfordstories.ox.ac.uk/torch).



## Museum of Natural History Poster Presentation

On 2 November 2018, the Society for the Study of Human Biology (SSHB) celebrated the Annual Geoffrey Harrison Memorial Lecture at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (OUMNH). This year, the lecture was given by Nick Mascie-Taylor, Professor of Human Population Biology and Health at the University of Cambridge.

A reception followed the lecture set within the main galleries of the museum. Research student Milly Farrell, from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Oxford Brookes, was one of 12 local researchers allocated a poster space for the event. Milly's research focuses on the health and social status of Irish immigrants based in London around the time of the Irish Potato Famine, through analysing skeletal groups buried in central London. Milly said, "The event was a showcase of current research into human population health and migration and I was grateful to be given the opportunity to present some of my findings to specialists and non-specialists alike. Poster presentations are a great way to engage in open discussion about your work and challenge your research objectives."



## Life Beyond the PhD

PhD student George Saltaouras, from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, was delighted to be given the opportunity to attend the 11th "Life Beyond the PhD" conference, which took place at Cumberland Lodge in August 2018. George's place at the conference was funded by Professor Alistair Fitt, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University. The conference gathered PhD students from a variety of disciplines, from art to neurobiology and from social sciences to engineering, to celebrate postgraduate research culture in the UK. The theme for this year was "postgraduate wellbeing and mental health".

During the three day conference, George attended lectures about the research culture in the UK (with a particular focus on the Research Excellence Framework), presentation and writing skills, public engagement and self-leadership. Also, two recently conferred PhD candidates shared their views and experiences in undertaking a PhD and how this had benefited their lives. On day three, George had the opportunity to present his research work in nutrition and cancer care to a non-specialist audience. This was followed by questions from the audience and George received valuable feedback on his presentation skills.

During the last two days of the conference, the students were split into four groups and were asked to prepare an interdisciplinary research proposal on a topic related to social inequalities. George's team, Team Flitcroft, prepared a project proposal aimed at enhancing access to Higher Education for students from a deprived area in London. The group consisted of students in health sciences, social sciences, classics and engineering. They managed to create a project in which everyone could contribute with their own experience and expertise. The proposal was well-received by the 'funding' team and the judges decided Team Flitcroft had the most innovative and realistic research proposal! George said, "It was a fantastic experience to overcome challenges and create a successful interdisciplinary proposal."

Apart from the educational aspect of the conference, George was also pleased to meet students from all over the UK, to learn about their research interests and experiences of undertaking a PhD. George said, "The overall experience of staying at Cumberland Lodge was great. The accommodation and food were of a very high standard and walks around the gardens were a great treat during the breaks. I would like to thank Professor Alistair Fitt and the Graduate College for giving me the opportunity to attend by covering the expenses of this conference. I would highly recommend all research students consider applying for this opportunity if it is offered again!"





## Emerging Scholar Award for Hospitality Student

In September 2018, Sebastiaan Raymaekers, PhD student from the Oxford School of Hospitality Management, attended the 11th International Conference on the Inclusive Museum in Granada, Spain. The conference was organised by the Common Ground Research Network and looked into making museums a more inclusive environment for visitors, employees and exhibitions. A range of scholars and practitioners from 42 different countries attended and the presentations looked at practical and academic studies which unpicked different aspects of museum inclusivity.

Sebastiaan presented his research on the integration and learning of volunteers. He was also invited to chair a number of sessions during the conference and was involved in the registration of participants. At the end of conference, Sebastiaan was awarded an Emerging Scholar Award. This award is for PhD students and early career researchers who have an active academic interest in the conference area. It is a strong professional development opportunity for doctoral students as they gain exposure to an international audience.

Sebastiaan thoroughly enjoyed his time at the conference and made some invaluable contacts with curators, practitioners and academics from the USA, Belgium, the Netherlands and Australia. He gained some experience as a chair and presenter and he was regarded as a 'strict, but fair' session chair. He has also been invited to return to any of the Common Ground conferences as an Emerging Scholar and he was given access to all the published Common Ground resources for a year.

Sebastiaan said, "I am looking forward to hopefully attending next year's conference on the Inclusive Museum, which is to be held in Buenos Aires. I highly recommend all research students consider attending the Common Ground Research Network events, as they provide a significant network of academics and practitioners; a network that is invaluable to any early career researcher."



## IF Oxford Science and Ideas Festival

Psychology PhD students, Parmida Mohammadpour and Rhea Arini, were excited to help run the PsychScience booth at the IF Oxford Science and Ideas Festival. The booth was set up and lead by Dr Olivia Afonso and had a variety of activities for families, including computer games, visual illusions, mirror tracing, writing challenges, Stroop test and brain quizzes which left participants questioning their perception.

Parmida said, "Volunteering at the IF Oxford Science Festival was a great experience. I had a great time running the mirror tracing activity; challenging children and their parents to draw around a pattern whilst looking through a mirror rather than directly at their hand. I was also recruiting parents for my study on 'Home Numeracy Practices of Primary School Children: Parent Perspectives'. This project has the potential to expand on the exploration of how parents support their children's home numeracy learning, and bridge the gap in knowledge between home and school learning."

Rhea said, "I was responsible for the activity employing computer games to study the development of children's morality, which forms part of my PhD project. Specifically, I had prepared a 'justice system' in which there were embedded videos of a different set of norm transgressions occurring between players in Minecraft, a worldwide popular commercial game. Children aged 7–11 years participated in the experiment. They were the judges of the justice system and had to decide whether to punish misbehaving players and compensate their victims. I measured children's enjoyment deriving from compensation vs punishment and their endorsement of different punishment motivations. With this experiment, I hope to help shed light on the cognitive processes underlying children's moral behaviour along the developmental trajectory."



## Brookes hosts successful Women's Academic Forum

PhD student Jasmin Dall'Agnola, along with her supervisor Dr Sarah Whitmore, recently organised the first Eurasia, East and Central European Studies (EECES) Women's Academic Forum, which was held at the Centre for Global Politics, Economy and Society at Oxford Brookes University during September 2018. The forum aimed to connect early career and established female scholars researching the former Communist space.

During the first year of her PhD, Jasmin noticed that there are many female scholars researching the former Communist space, but they seem to be less visible than male scholars in this field. After participating at the British Association of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies (BASEES) annual conference in April 2018, this impression intensified. Even though the percentage of female PhD students in this field seemed to be higher than the percentage of male students, almost 90% of early career scholars presenting their work at the BASEES annual conference were men. This made Jasmin question where this gender disparity came from, and why it still existed in the 21st century.

Jasmin wanted to build a network among early career and established female scholars researching former Communist countries, and approached her supervisor Dr Sarah Whitmore for advice. Sarah supported the idea from the beginning and together they ran a survey to assess the need for this

network. Thanks to social media, the survey travelled around the globe and more than 90% of respondents mentioned that gender disparity was still a quite common issue in this academic field.

Jasmin's PhD discusses the reality and nature of the two phenomena of globalisation and national identity within the context of the former Soviet Union and emphasises why post-Soviet citizens' national identification with their nation is disproportionately affected by the side effects of globalisation. The forum gave Jasmin the opportunity to meet other female PhD candidates researching former Soviet countries and allowed her to engage with them about gender specific topics, such as the reconciliation of motherhood in academia, and safety issues for women on fieldwork in former Soviet countries.

Moreover, the experience of organising the forum helped Jasmin to increase her academic network, build on her organisational skills and also to promote her own academic profile and research. The one-day workshop attracted a global audience and researchers from more than 10 different countries. According to feedback received from delegates, it was a great success and the whole day was accompanied by a lovely, positive atmosphere. Jasmin said, "With the launch of the first EECES Women's Forum at Brookes, a dream (to use the words of Zuckerberg), which started in my dorm room in Oxford, finally became true."

## Live Art and Performance Group raises its profile

Two years ago, Brookes' PhD Alumna, Veronica Cordova de la Rosa, and current research student, Peta Lloyd, launched the Live Art and Performance Group (LAPER) within the School of Arts at Oxford Brookes. Their aim was to raise the profile of live art and performance art in Oxford, and to create opportunities for students from different universities, including Ruskin School of Art, and researchers from all around the world to be supported in developing and recording their own work.

Since its launch, LAPER has successfully raised its profile and was pleased to acquire the necessary funding, from Santander and the School of Arts, to invite a diverse range of internationally acclaimed performers to attend fourteen lunchtime performances at the School of Arts. Veronica and Peta volunteer their time to curate and organise LAPER's series of performance art events in both private and public spaces in Oxford, as well as live events abroad. LAPER organised its first performance art festival 'ELASTIC' in April 2017, and its second International performance art festival 'Squash and Stretch' in November 2018.

You can find out more about LAPER's activities, including monthly art sessions, by following them on Twitter (@ilovelaper) or on their website at [www.brookes.ac.uk/school-of-arts/research-groups/laper/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/school-of-arts/research-groups/laper/)



# Law student's success at Essay Awards Dinner

Craig Allen (left) with Daniel Benson, Religious Liberty Committee of Reuben Clark Law Society.



Craig Allen, research student in the School of Law at Oxford Brookes, was delighted to be invited to Washington DC to receive a prize for his essay on law and religion. The International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) and Religious Liberty Essay Awards Dinner brought together world leading scholars and the next generation of PhD students working in the field. Craig's award winning essay on practical and theoretical justifications for criminalising incitement to religious hatred began its journey during his undergraduate study at Brookes, where Craig obtained a First-Class honours degree and was awarded the Eric Kemp Prize, by the Ecclesiastical Law Society, for an essay on why religion should impact on the criminal law.

During his undergraduate studies, Craig gained valuable experience from attending the Law and Religion Scholars Network PhD workshop and the Oxford Brookes PhD Research Conference. Craig said, "My enthusiasm for my undergraduate dissertation topic did not end even after submission and at the end of my third year, I considered whether this could be the start of a PhD in law. I knew that Professor Edge and Professor Vickers would offer me the best guidance for my topic, as two of the leading scholars in the study of law and religion in the common law world. I was lucky enough to be accepted on a funded PhD studentship at Brookes in 2017 and I am extremely grateful for this chance to pursue my area of interest at my university of choice."

Professor Peter Edge said, "Craig became very excited in his third year as he realised that he could move from being a consumer of knowledge, to a creator of knowledge, and that we wanted to help him make the transition. It was great to watch his passion and confidence grow."

During his time as a PhD student, Craig has arranged a PhD workshop for domestic and international students writing PhDs in varying areas of law and religion. He has also presented a chapter on his work during the Law Lunchtime Lecture Series. Craig spoke of his recent trip, "I am so grateful to Brookes for financially supporting my recent trip to Washington D.C. to attend the International Religious Liberty Essay Awards dinner. The support allowed me to attend the ceremony and accept my award. Additionally, it gave me the chance to discuss my paper and PhD topic with leading international scholars and senior officials from the US government specialising in law and religion. I was also able to talk generally about current topics in law and religion with other PhD students from all over the world. We now keep in touch and discuss international developments and challenges within the field."

Craig's prize winning essay will be being published by ICLRS in 2019.

## Creative Writing student shortlisted for Costa Book Award

Following on from her successful publishing deals and subsequent book launches (in both the UK and US) earlier this year, Anne Youngson's debut novel 'Meet Me at the Museum' has been shortlisted for a major literary prize.

The Costa Book Awards are one of the UK's most prestigious and popular literary prizes and since their launch in 1971, the awards have rewarded a wide range of excellent books and authors across all genres.

The awards have five categories, with one of the five winning books selected as the overall Costa Book of the Year. This year's category shortlists for the Costa Book Awards were announced on BBC Radio 4 Front Row on 22 November and Anne, PhD student in the Department of English and Modern Languages at Oxford Brookes, is on the shortlist for the Costa Book Awards' first novel category.

The category winners will be announced on Monday 7 January 2019 and the Costa Book of the Year will be announced on Tuesday 29 January 2019.

# Santander Scholarship *Winners for 2017/2018*

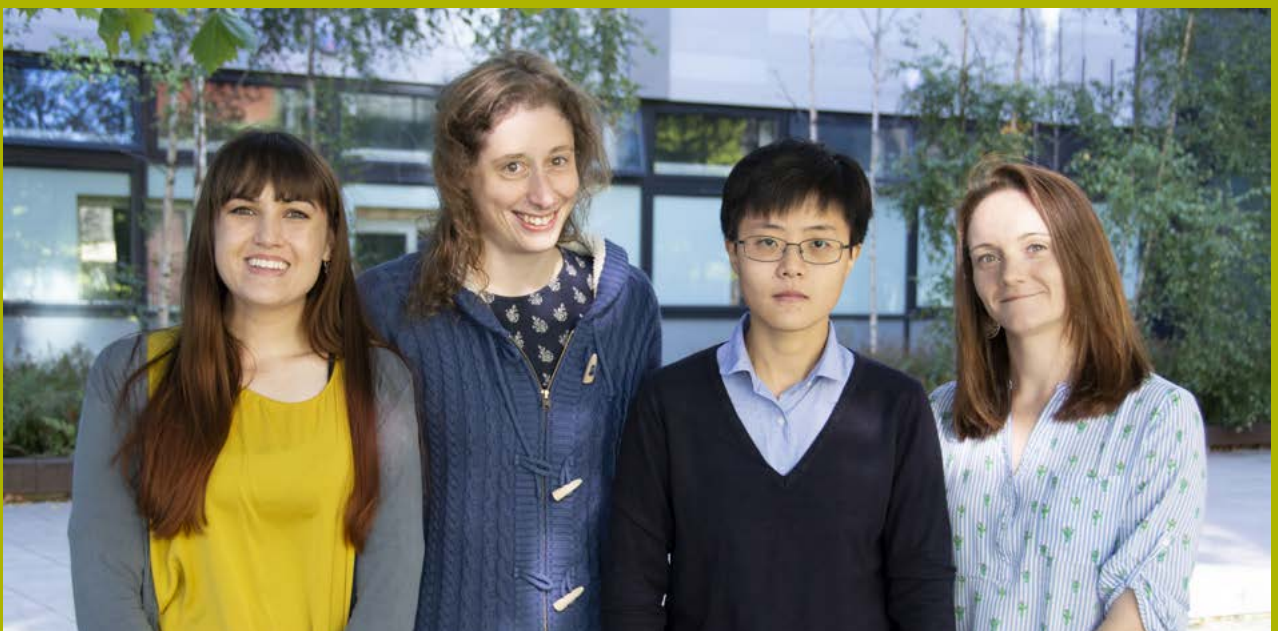
We were delighted that once again Santander were able to award research degree scholarships for current MPhil/PhD students at Oxford Brookes University for the 2017/18 academic year.

A number of Santander scholarships were available and these were awarded on the basis of academic merit, as well as the suitability of candidates for their chosen courses in terms of how the course builds on previous education and experience, and relates to career ambitions and personal development.

Applications for the scholarships were open to students who had graduated from a university that is part of the Santander Universidades Scheme, which includes universities in the UK, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Spain, Portugal, Russia, the United States, China, Germany, Singapore, Poland and Belgium. The scholarship fund aims to reward the most academically gifted students from these institutions.

Some of the scholarships offered up to £2,500 towards the fees for the 2017/18 academic year, and others contributed towards the continuation fees, which aimed to help students financially while writing up the final drafts of their theses for examination.

We heard a little bit from each of our scholarship winners about their research and how the scholarships have benefitted them, helping them progress with their research programmes and onto the next stage of their careers.







**Aimee Oxley**  
Department of  
Social Sciences

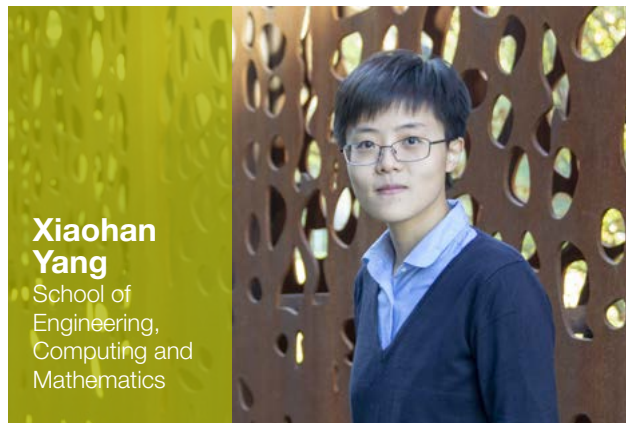
## The title of my PhD is ‘**Great ape conservation in the matrix: investigating the socio-ecological responses of chimpanzees living in a forest-farm mosaic, Uganda**’.

My research investigates how chimpanzees living in an extremely fragmented forest habitat respond to living in this human-modified environment. As tropical forests become increasingly lost and fragmented, their non-human inhabitants must either adapt or perish. Many species are known to survive in human-influenced habitats, but to what extent their survival is secure and how different species adapt to various anthropogenic activities is not yet understood. Faced with high human population growth rate, the forests in and around Budongo Forest Reserve in Western Uganda are under pressure for agricultural land, as well as demands for fuelwood and timber for construction.

I aim to understand whether, and how, chimpanzees flexibly adjust their behaviour according to the anthropogenic influences in their habitat. Essentially, by better understanding the behavioural flexibility and responses of chimpanzees in a human-modified habitat, my research aims to understand how humans and chimpanzees can co-exist in areas where there is a high degree of overlapping demands on the forest. With these results, I hope to inform land management and conservation strategies in Kasongire.

The Santander scholarship has helped me to make timely progress with my PhD. Working part-time, whilst doing a full-time research degree, is extremely difficult as there are simply not enough hours in the day. This scholarship meant that when my term-time job finished in the summer, I was able to focus solely on my studies for a few months, and I am on target to submit on schedule.

I can't wait to share my results with the academic community as well as the local people in the village where I work in Uganda. Shortly after completion, I will return to Kasongire to continue research and work with local people to discuss mitigation strategies based on findings from my PhD. Then over the coming years, I will work hard to write up my results for publication and attend conferences so that the academic world can hear about the fascinating chimpanzees of Kasongire!



**Xiaohan Yang**  
School of  
Engineering,  
Computing and  
Mathematics

## The title of my PhD is ‘**Design Analysis and Tests of Reliable Memristor Based Logic Architectures**’.

Metal Oxide Semiconductor (MOS) transistor-based chips are currently being limited by scaling difficulties and parasitic capacitance. Therefore, chip manufacturers are beginning to invest huge resource in order to explore alternative technologies for the evolution of computing devices. A memristor (short for “memory-resistor”), a two terminal nano-scale electronic device, is a highly promising alternative technology.

In this research project, we investigate the different behaviour models of the memristor and by modifying and improving those models we generalise an asymmetric hysteresis I-V characteristic for logic design particularly. Then, we propose a single cycle purely memristive logic XOR architecture, consisting of only 4 memristors. We seamlessly integrate this architecture with only one transistor, thereby resulting a hybrid 1T-4M architecture with dual XOR/AND and XNOR/OR functionality. We have a patent published on this part of the work. Meanwhile, we also propose memristive MIN-MAX functionality by realising that memristor have inherent properties for the multiple valued logic. We explore the effects of frequencies on the physical parameters of memristor; thereby proposing a reliable high frequency design technique based on our 1T-4M architectures. To this end, we show that our proposed memristive logic architecture requires considerably low power and low overhead while maintaining the reliable performance at low, as well as high, frequencies. The overall aim is to design large reliable memristive logic systems which could lead to high frequency, low power and low area chip design.

I first heard about Oxford Brookes University from a visiting research student whilst I was working as a hardware engineer for China Electronics Technology Group Corporation No. 28 Research Institute. I was impressed by the research undertaken by the Advanced Reliable Computer Systems Group (ARCoS) and decided I wanted to carry out my PhD research at Brookes. The Santander scholarship has enabled me to buy more research related resources, such as paid Journals, with the money I have saved on tuition fees. I have been able to manage my expenses properly, concentrate more on my study, and I look forward to continuing with my research and exploring new ideas.



**Sarah  
Slator**

School of History,  
Philosophy and  
Culture

## The title of my PhD is **‘Politics in the Court Room: International Diplomacy, the Global Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Rivonia Trial, South Africa, 1963-64’.**

Between October 1963 and July 1964, ten defendants were tried under the General Laws Amendment (Sabotage) Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. Amongst the ten, there were several prominent campaigners against the apartheid regime, including Nelson Mandela. This trial was widely observed, and condemned, across the world and was a subject of UN Security Council Resolution 190, demanding the release of all persons convicted or being tried for opposition to apartheid.

My work examines both the international diplomacy and international campaign movements that surrounded the Rivonia trial in South Africa by completing detailed archival research of government bodies and various campaign organisations. I have chosen to examine the diplomacy of the US and the UK with South Africa and I have visited various archives in both countries to view primary sources. I am keen to explore to what extent the Rivonia trial acted as a rallying point for campaigning groups to focus on, as well as an event that Government officials in both the US and the UK had to respond to, and I hope to find examples of where these two worlds collided.

Being awarded a Santander scholarship has been greatly beneficial for my studies. I have been fortunate enough to win funding for some of the necessary travel to archives during my studies, but some of this I have had to fund myself. Having won this scholarship has eased the financial burden I face, leaving me free to undertake further trips to gather vital information for my project.

I have really enjoyed the three years I have spent so far on this project. I have nearly completed the information gathering phase of my research and I am shortly to begin my writing up. I am looking forward to bringing together all of the work that I have completed in the last few years. After I complete my PhD, I am aiming for a career in academia and I am taking every opportunity I can to support this aim over the course of my studies.



**Miranda  
Strubel**

Department of  
Social Sciences

## The title of my PhD is **‘Shared Landscapes: the reintroduction of red kite in the UK’.**

The Red Kite Reintroduction Programme was initiated in 1989 and has since been recognised as one of the most successful conservation programmes ever carried out in Britain. However, in recent years, print media stories have suggested that the bird’s popularity might be fading in certain areas. My project looks at the social aspects of the red kite reintroduction and explores people’s perceptions of red kites in both urban and rural, high and low density, red kite areas. My aim is to identify the dominant themes arising from people’s narratives about red kites, as well as understand how they fit into people’s relationships with, and willingness to tolerate, wildlife in general.

This project is the first of its kind to examine human-red kite relations in the UK and will make an intellectual contribution to ongoing discussions in human-nonhuman animal studies, animal geography, conservation biology and wildlife management. Several other reintroductions have taken place in the UK in recent times, and with a number of ‘rewilding’ proposals currently being set forth, namely the reintroduction of wolves and lynx, there is now an even greater need to understand people’s tolerance capacities towards wildlife. For reintroductions to continue successfully, the human dimensions need to be better understood. The findings of this study will contribute valuable insights into local human-red kite interactions and further assist conservation activities in the UK.

The Santander Scholarship has provided me with continued financial support after my initial three year studentship concluded at the end of January 2018. The writing-up period can be a difficult time and having less financial pressure has certainly helped.

Having the opportunity to make an original contribution to my field is a very fulfilling thought. Impact is something that is very important to me, and if my research influences how something is approached in the future, that will be the biggest reward. I want my research to be applied so that both animals and people can coexist in a shared landscape that is mutually beneficial to both.



## Lynsey O'Rourke

Department of  
Psychology,  
Health and  
Professional  
Development



### The title of my PhD is 'Investigating the impact of spellcheck on writing for students with and without dyslexia'.

I have conducted a number of studies to investigate the impact that spellcheck has on writing behaviour and on texts produced by undergraduate students, with and without dyslexia. While it is typically assumed that spellcheck provides a positive boost to the writing process, my data suggests that the automatic underlining of spellcheck actually interrupts writing and disrupts the train of thought. This appears to be especially true for students with dyslexia, who struggle with spelling.

Results from this research have implications for writing theory and what we know about dyslexia and writing. This is particularly important for the student population for whom writing is a large part of their day to day lives and whose academic achievement is often measured using written assignments. I'm currently writing the final part of my thesis, using my findings to make recommendations about writing with spellcheck for students with and without dyslexia.

This research degree has provided excellent opportunities to enhance skills that are valued by employers. Over the course of the PhD, I have attended and presented at international conferences; I was invited to write a book chapter, published last year; I've been awarded multiple grants which allowed me to attend training specific to my research methods; and I've gained teaching qualifications and taught on a variety of undergraduate modules. I was also able to help provide a training opportunity for others by organising a departmental training day for eye tracking, which culminated in setting up the eye tracking lab at Brookes. These opportunities have allowed me to develop my research skills and teaching skills, but also to experience what an academic career could be like.

I'm very grateful for the Santander scholarship. It has paid the university fees for my fourth year of study, allowing me to devote more time to writing my thesis. I hope that by continuing to conduct and share my research, I will contribute to the development of better practical support for struggling learners.

## Kat Scott

Department of  
Social Sciences



### The title of my PhD is 'Orangutans in the New Frontier: Strategies for Survival in Altered Landscapes'.

Previous research has highlighted that orangutans are able to exist within mixed agroforest landscapes; however, the extent to which this affects their health and ability to survive long term in these disturbed areas remains largely unknown. My interdisciplinary study investigates whether, and how, the survival prospects of orangutans could be improved in these areas and looks at disturbance (an oil palm concession) and the Bornean orangutan sub-species *Pongo pygmaeus wurmbii*.

Very little is known about orangutan movements within oil palm. We need to examine if conflict exists in this plantation, understand how orangutans utilise this habitat and the implications for their continued survival if access to this area were to change, and begin the work into mitigation strategies, where necessary, in order to protect these apes. I will be evoking with the plantation owners on best practice guidelines for use in their plantation, and the training we will continue to offer staff, with regards to a no-kill policy, corridor-creation and conducting research, will help empower local people to look after their wildlife.

Given the sensitive nature of my project, I really struggled to get funding to study in an oil palm plantation. As I am a self-funded student, I got to a point where I would be unable to continue my fieldwork or pay my fees. Receiving the Santander scholarship took a huge weight off my shoulders. It allowed me to reallocate my own money in the field so that I could purchase more equipment such as a new GPS, compasses and watches for the staff.

At the moment, I am focusing on analysing my data and writing my thesis. I hope to publish this study in a number of journals, as well as presenting my results at the International Primate Society meeting in Kenya next year. On completion of my PhD, I hope to pursue a career in the environmental sector. Working with an oil palm company has really opened my eyes to the role that businesses play in conservation and the environment.

When available, details of Santander Scholarships will be advertised at [www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/prospective-students/funding](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/prospective-students/funding)

# Research Student Profiles

Here, along with our regular research student profiles, we speak to one of our Masters by Research students.



## Benjamin Franks

Masters by Research student  
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

The title of my thesis is 'A Perceptual Approach to Decision-Making: The Quiet-Eye as an insight into perception-action couplings in Elite Goalkeepers'.

**"I really enjoy the autonomy involved in running my own research project in an area where I feel I can make a key difference and an area in which I enjoy studying."**

The eyes are the key sensory organ for the brain and provide powerful binocular visuals by picking up reflections of light from the perceptual field. In order to have a constant feedback of images, humans and animals must constantly move their line of sight to process images to the brain. In order to act in certain ways, the eye must lock on to certain 'targets' to extract the key information that may inform whether to act or not. This process of fixing on certain sources of optical energy is known as the Quiet Eye.

The Quiet Eye (QE) is a visual search tool that focuses on certain locations in the visual field, and in sport, these fixations occur prior to the start of a movement by an athlete. The QE is discussed as a mechanism in the eye that directs decision-making and distinguishes experts from novices. Research has highlighted that experts are able to specify a source of information in the visual field and fixate on this longer compared to their novice counterparts.

My study seeks to explore how athletes are able to make decisions by using the visual information available to them, with a focus on the Quiet Eye phenomenon. It attempts to understand how changing constraints in different training environments alters the visual information that guides behaviour. The limited range of QE studies has left large gaps within the research, creating room for myth and ideology to 'fill the voids' that current research is unable to answer. As Panchuk and Vickers (2006) discussed, sporting actions and movements under time and space pressure are often characterised by uncertainty, for which goalkeepers have reduced time to act and process decisions.

Within the Goalkeeping field, QE studies have focused on the penalty kick and identifying what visual information aids the goalkeepers to save the ball. Whilst it is highly important to understand the role of gaze in penalty kicks, these particular actions are a minority for goalkeepers. Just 91 kicks were taken in the English Premier League in the 2015/2016 season from a total of 760 games (just 11.97% of games). Therefore, the ability to determine the role of QE in more dynamic situations is important in order to develop a better understanding of decision making processes in sport, and to determine the optimal training scenarios to best develop performance.

I really enjoy the autonomy involved in running my own research project in an area where I feel I can make a key difference and an area in which I enjoy studying. The biggest challenges that I have faced are dealing with elite sporting environments and the access constraints involved when trying to incorporate research into a club running an elite programme with significant financial involvements. It has been difficult to overcome these issues. Constant networking and re-planning has taken place to ensure that the research has a rich and diverse enough sample, without encroaching on training programmes, and I have been fortunate to have a supervisory team with a great breadth and depth of knowledge.

My future plans are to stay in research and lecturing within the areas of sport coaching research, environment design and perception/cognition in sport performance. In time, I would like to move onto a PhD, expanding on my master's research within different sporting contexts, and the impact on novice and developmental performers.





**Avar Almukhtar**  
**School of the Built Environment**

The title of my PhD is **'Place-identity in historic cities; embracing heritage, globalisation, and conflict in Erbil Iraq'**.

There is wide concern about the erosion of place-identity in our cities and urban areas. The world has experienced significant changes ranging from globalisation, technology advancement, and rapid urbanisation, to conflict and war. Throughout history, war has caused fundamental political, economic, and social transformations around the world, spatially impacting urban form. Cities that face conflict and war, such as the Iraqi and Syrian cities of Aleppo and Mosul, are under attack; not only on the human and physical level, but also on intangible elements such as culture, traditions, historical values, and heritage sites and landmarks. As the situation stabilises and political, economic, and social changes emerge, reconstruction efforts begin as a part of the post-war recovery process. However, changes introduced by post-war urban reconstruction may result in challenges that threaten and weaken local identity, such as rapid urbanisation and globalisation.

Iraqi Kurdistan is a clear example of such a case where place-identity is a struggle between social values, the importance of heritage and tradition, new governance structures, and global promotion of the region through a post-war urban reconstruction process. The city of Erbil specifically is one of the cities in the forefront of these challenges as it is the pre-eminent capital of the emerging Iraqi-Kurdistan Nation, which is the context of my research.

My research studies the transformation of Erbil and its historical identity during the post-war reconstruction period. It employs a morphological analysis of the city's historic core and contemporary areas combined with key informant interviews with local residents, policy makers, and stakeholders in order to explore the impact of the intensive post-war urban development process on the city's place-identity. Key findings of Erbil's morphological analysis indicate that the post-war reconstruction process has radically transformed the city's urban fabric both in the old and the contemporary areas, reflecting globalised design patterns and ignoring the historic morphological traces that the city has acquired through centuries. Consequently, post-war urban transformation has been negatively impacting Erbil's unique place-identity.

Additionally, this loss of place-identity has spread to other areas of the city as a result of insensitive and short-sighted redevelopment strategies and policies. Therefore, the erosion of place-identity is of growing importance, particularly in the context of historic cities facing, or coming out of, periods of conflict and especially through post-war development interventions, rapid urbanisation, and political aspirations to promote the city globally as a capital of an emerging autonomous micro-nation. There is a pressing need to address the issue of place-identity within a planning and urban design framework in a post-conflict zone context.

I am open on what to do after completion of my PhD. I would like to continue working in research, pursue a career in academia and do consultancy in international urban development.

***Changes introduced by post-war urban reconstruction may result in challenges that threaten and weaken local identity, such as rapid urbanisation and globalisation.***



**Haiping Zhu**  
**Oxford Brookes Business School**

The title of my PhD is **'The influence of Chinese philosophical religious traditions on Chinese consumption behaviour: a multiple case study of Chinese festivals'**.

My research explores how the Chinese philosophical religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism impact on the consumption behaviour of contemporary Chinese consumers. As China is rapidly becoming an important market for consumer goods, in particular luxury, it is critical for marketers to develop a more nuanced understanding of Chinese consumers. Relatively little is known about the differences in consumer purchasing and consumption patterns of Chinese consumers. This research uses multiple case studies of the three most influential philosophical religious traditions in China - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - and the associated knowledge of their influence on Chinese consumer behaviour today.

Although there are many studies on the influence of Chinese cultural values on Chinese consumer behaviour, most of them consider only one cultural dimension. For instance: Confucian luxury consumption; Confucianism culture values and gift giving behaviour; and Chinese luxury consumption behaviour. Few studies have explored Chinese consumers' preferences for non-luxury products. China has three core philosophical religious traditions - Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism - so people are subjected to a wide range of cultural value reference groups that ultimately affect their purchase behaviour. In order to provide marketers with better knowledge on how to differentiate their marketing strategies in China, this study seeks to explore the

purchasing and consumption experience of Chinese consumers as influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The key contribution is likely to lie with the development of a framework and its evidence-based conceptualisation of Chinese consumption behaviour across all three traditions. In doing so, the research will offer a (relatively rare) non-Western perspective on contemporary consumption behaviours rooted in a very different cultural heritage.

Being a research student is a fantastic opportunity to research a topic I am interested in; in detail, with a new perspective, and ultimately to achieve something significant. I am grateful that both of my supervisors have been very supportive throughout the course of my PhD and have provided me with many strategies to help improve my academic English. They have also encouraged me to do presentations, attend conferences and lectures, and write papers. I have been able to access a variety of workshops at Brookes. Specifically, I found the Faculty 20-20 seminars and presentations really helped me understand and plan the way I will move forward in this research process.

After completing my PhD, I aspire to continue my career and further develop my education. I plan to engage in post-doctoral studies and deepen my consumer behaviour research by combining it with the new trend of virtual reality technology or artificial intelligence.

***China has three core philosophical religious traditions, so people are subjected to a wide range of cultural value reference groups that ultimately affect their purchase behaviour.***





**Sam Connelly**

**Department of Biological and Medical Sciences**

The title of my PhD is ‘**Understanding the Genome-wide response of *Streptomyces coelicolor* to the Glycopeptide Antibiotic Teicoplanin**’.

Bacteria are constantly faced with a whole plethora of stressful challenges and their stress response can determine whether they live or die. In particular, stress caused by antibiotics has become gravely important in medical settings as antibiotic stress has given rise to ‘superbugs’. These are bacteria that have developed coping mechanisms to deal with such stress, threatening to hurl us into a post-antibiotic era. The problem has been exacerbated by the decline in new drugs reaching the market, commanding stricter measures on the most important antibiotics in an effort to slow the development of resistance against them.

Of particular importance are the Actinomycete-derived glycopeptide antibiotics. There are several commonly used glycopeptides employed in clinical medicine including the related drugs vancomycin and teicoplanin. Both are last resort drugs and are particularly effective in treating a number of severe hospital acquired infections caused by Gram-positive bacteria including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). MRSA caused 80,000 severe infections and 11,000 deaths during 2013 in the United States alone.

Glycopeptides act on bacteria by targeting the cell surface, interfering with its maturation and compromising the integrity of the cell. The first resistant clinical isolates were identified in the 1980s, which employed strategies for altering their cell surface, reducing the efficacy of glycopeptides and

maintaining cell wall integrity.

Although we have a good understanding of the resistance mechanisms behind vancomycin, we have a poor understanding of those specifically for teicoplanin. Recent work has shown that one of the genes found in a harmless model actinomycete, *Streptomyces coelicolor*, is able to decrease teicoplanin sensitivity but this effect does not cross over to vancomycin. This indicates that there are possible separate classes of genes involved in resistance to these two very closely related drugs.

There could be more resistance genes hiding within the genome of *S. coelicolor* that are also able to confer some resistance to teicoplanin and other glycopeptides. Finding these will help to improve our understanding for how this drug in particular works. To do this, we are employing the latest RNA sequencing (RNA-seq) technologies to understand the expression of all the genes within *S. coelicolor* after exposure to teicoplanin. Through identifying which genes change the most, we may be able to glean an insight into which genes are the most useful when responding to the damage caused by this antibiotic and develop strategies to prolong its clinical use.

The best thing about being a research student is being able to focus on an area that you are interested in. This project offered me the chance to carry out interdisciplinary research by navigating the fields of molecular microbiology and bioinformatics. Currently, I’m sitting on the fence about my future career, but the great thing about doing a PhD is that you pick up so many transferable skills, giving you plenty of career options.

***Antibiotic stress has given rise to ‘superbugs’. These are bacteria that have developed coping mechanisms to deal with such stress, threatening to hurl us into a post-antibiotic era.***



## **Sheila Isabel Irigoyen Zozaya** **School of the Built Environment**

The title of my PhD is **'Defining and restoring the cultural landscape and place-identity of historic cities: The case of Mérida, Yucatán, México'**.

Cultural landscapes are historically intertwined in the urban development of many cities. They provide a sense of cultural identity and help explain the relationship between natural and human processes through time. In the past, traditional cultural landscapes were characterised by their symbiotic connection with local communities and their ability to adapt to the environment. However, many of them have experienced fundamental transformations with severe impact on the ecosystem of human settlements. Unsustainable solutions in architecture and urban design, as well as the homogenisation of cultural landscapes, are becoming common phenomena affecting their local place-identity.

The city of Merida is a representative case. Merida is the capital of the Yucatan state which concentrates the political, economic and cultural power in the region. For many years, these enticements and its geographic location have attracted changes in the urban scenery. From the sixteenth to the first half of the twentieth century, new trends transformed the Mayan cultural landscape; yet, key heritage values endured and evolved thanks to their effectiveness and resilience.

Nowadays, these values have been forgotten and the city is becoming an anonymous entity, poorly defined and insensible to the value of environment. New developments usually imitate international consumer trends uncritically forgetting the

lessons from the past. Moreover, weak planning strategies, regulatory framework and governance processes foster the rise of incompatible land uses, impacting negatively on the continuity of traditional cultural landscapes. This erosion is a major concern for the residents and various professional groups, who are seeking new ways to preserve their heritage in order to rediscover their identity and to achieve sustainable solutions at the urban level. Then, the challenge will be to promote an innovative approach in urban design that re-evaluates and integrates the essential components of the local cultural landscape and place-identity, to preserve the heritage and also to find equilibrium between nostalgia of the past and progress.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to develop a conceptual framework and methodology to define the cultural landscape and place-identity in the city of Merida, Yucatan, and to develop theoretical and urban design propositions to achieve a positive and sustainable place-identity. This will benefit the local community to: a) preserve and revitalise their cultural landscapes; and b) add value to the urban development, encouraging a sustainable design in Merida.

I have been very fortunate to have two wonderful supervisors, Georgia Butina Watson and Laura Novo de Acevedo, whose guidance and professionalism has been essential to develop my proposal. After completion of my PhD, I would like to go back into teaching and continue doing research. New knowledge is waiting to be discovered every day! I would also like to continue with my art.

***This erosion is a major concern for the residents and various professional groups, who are seeking new ways to preserve their heritage in order to rediscover their identity.***





**Anne Youngson**  
**Department of English and Modern Languages**

The title of my PhD is ‘Once Upon a Time: A study into how stories begin’.

My research project is designed to explore how stories start, through both theory and practice. The first few lines or paragraphs of a story define the relationship between the reader, the writer and the story being told. They provide clues to the world the reader will find herself inhabiting. They condition the reader to expect a certain type of story, or to expect that certain aspects of that story will be important, and the writer can choose whether to fulfil or play with those expectations.

From a writer’s point of view, the way the story unfolds can be a significant factor in how it develops, where it goes to in its trajectory. There has been relatively little written on this topic, from the point of view of the writer. Approaches to the critical reading of literature can be applied to the first lines and sentences, and it is part of my study to review how this has been done, and how relevant to the work of a writer this criticism can be in helping to shape the beginning.

In my study, I am concentrating on short stories, partly because the beginning has more resonance for the reader than a longer piece of work. Also, it is more important for the writer, who has to convey the content and themes of the story in a much shorter space and therefore has to make

every part of the narrative work. As well as analysing critical writing on the subject, I am studying the work of selected 20th and 21st century short story writers, writing in English. From these two strands, I am devising a model of the types of opening in short stories and the ways in which these can be deployed. As a major part of the final submission, I will have a collection of short stories I have written, inspired by and developing the different forms of opening. Some of these will be experimental, or written in particular genres.

This approach, of applying the theories I am developing to a creative body of work, has the potential to be useful in demonstrating the range of options open to a writer in beginning a narrative, but also in enhancing my own creative practice.

I enjoy the flexibility of being a research student, having the time and space to follow up on ideas that might not, initially, seem to be relevant but which can turn out to be fruitful lines of inquiry. One of the short stories I set out to write for the project developed into a novel-length piece, which has now been published by a major UK publisher. I am planning to develop both the short story collection and other ideas for longer fiction for submission to publishers.

For more current research student profiles please visit:  
[www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/student-profiles](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/student-profiles)

***The first few lines or paragraphs of a story define the relationship between the reader, the writer and the story being told. They provide clues to the world the reader will find herself inhabiting.***

# Stay connected

Brookes has a strong and vibrant research student community. Here are just some of the ways you can stay in touch:



## Graduate College Annual Research Student Exhibition

Come and join us in celebrating the extensive display of work submitted by our research students! Present at the exhibition yourself, support your fellow students, or come and find out more about doing a research degree at Brookes.

**Wednesday 3 April 2019, 10am – 5.30pm**  
**THE FORUM, JOHN HENRY BROOKES BUILDING, GIPSY LANE SITE**

The display will also be available to view on Thursday 4 April 2019.

If you would like more information, please go to [www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/annual-event/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/annual-event/) or email: [asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk)

## Research Degrees Team Office Hours

9.00am – 5.00pm

When Student Central is closed and the shutter is down at the counter, we are still available during office hours. A phone is mounted on the side of the drinks vending machine opposite the office. Please call us on x4244 (or on 01865 484244 from your mobile) and one of us will come out and help you with your query.

## Guided tour of MINI Plant Oxford

In November 2018, a group of research students went on a private guided tour of the MINI Plant in Cowley. The tour provided an opportunity to experience live production of MINI's made to individual customer specifications, from the welding of steel parts into car bodies to the individual interior equipment in the assembly. This was a chance to witness fascinating 21st century engineering, with 'the robots' being a particular highlight according to the positive feedback received.

If you have any feedback from Graduate College events, or suggestions for events we could run in the future, please email us on [asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk)



*"The tour was interesting from many viewpoints. It was enlightening to see some good old fashioned British manufacturing at work, but using very modern processes and techniques."*

ROBERT WILLIAMSON, FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

 Follow us on Twitter @BrookesGC

For further information on all of our activities please visit:

[www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/events](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/graduate-college/events)



# Spotlight on Research

Follow the research journey of one of Brookes' PhD students.

**KATIE MCCALLUM**  
Faculty of Health and  
Life Sciences



I have lived in Oxford and worked at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust for 15 years. Before starting my PhD, I was working as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Oncology. Currently, I am the Nursing Lead for the John Radcliffe Acute Oncology Team and I continue to work in this role part time whilst doing my PhD.

Academically, I did my initial training at the University of Ulster in Coleraine, graduating with a BSc (Hons) Nursing with RGN. My first MSc was in Advanced Practice (Palliative Care Nursing) from the University of Stirling, and I was one of the first cohort of Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) fellows from 2014 to 2017, studying for my MSc in Evidence Based Health Care at the University of Oxford and carrying out a practice-based project ('Improving the care pathway for newly diagnosed cancer patients at the John Radcliffe Hospital'). I graduated from Oxford with a distinction in November 2017. In December 2017, I was delighted to gain a clinical academic scholarship to allow me to study for a PhD at Brookes.

The title of my PhD is **'Exploring the quality of death and dying in the emergency department from the perspective of staff and carers.'**

My research project looks at the experiences of informal carers (relatives, friends, loved ones) when a patient

dies in the Emergency Department (ED). There are several examples in the literature of studies where the experiences of nurses and doctors have been studied, but there are very few examples of studies where the carers have been asked for their experiences.

As a practice-based clinical nurse, I feel passionately that we need to listen to the voices of the people we care for. When a patient has died, we obviously can't ask them, so the informal carers are the next best thing; yet, despite concerns being raised about the quality of death and dying in the ED since the 1970s, little has been done to work with the carers to improve things.

I am planning to use a qualitative case study approach and look forward to getting rich data from the carers I talk to. Ultimately, I would like to design a nursing model for use in the ED with end of life care patients, but the end point will obviously depend on the results I get from my study. Another thing I am passionate about is making my research relevant to practice, and to that end I am involved in the End of Life Care Group at the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust as well as being a member of the Clinical Ethics Advisory Group (CEAG) at the Trust.

As a research student, the best thing is having the time and space to think and (attempt to!) develop ideas. It is very challenging working clinically at the

same time as studying and I have to be very disciplined with myself so that I use my time as productively as possible. Building a support network of friends and colleagues is essential and, luckily, my husband is completely supportive; I couldn't do this without him!

There is a huge amount of support and training available to research students at Oxford Brookes. Part of studying at this level is deciding which seminars and teaching sessions to go to and which might be less useful. Seminars delivered by other PhD students, both from Brookes and internationally, have probably been the most helpful training I have had so far. I feel that the peer support I have received from other research students has been invaluable, and my supervisors are a great resource too!

It is hard to see beyond my next supervision session sometimes. I do love teaching and would perhaps like to do more of that in the future, although I feel very strongly that I would also like to continue working clinically – after all, the best thing about nursing is patient contact. At some point in the future, I would also like to write a novel and have already got several ideas which I jot down all the time.



**YOUR VOICE**  
**YOUR BROOKES**

**We're acting on  
your feedback**



At Oxford Brookes, we take the views of our students seriously. Your feedback is important so that we can continually improve our courses, services and support. We work closely with Brookes Union to listen to your views on a wide range of issues and create the best university experience for all.

**You told us...**

**We have...**

You can find out about some of the ways in which Oxford Brookes has acted on your feedback to improve your university experience at

**[www.brookes.ac.uk/students/your-voice-your-brookes/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/your-voice-your-brookes/)**