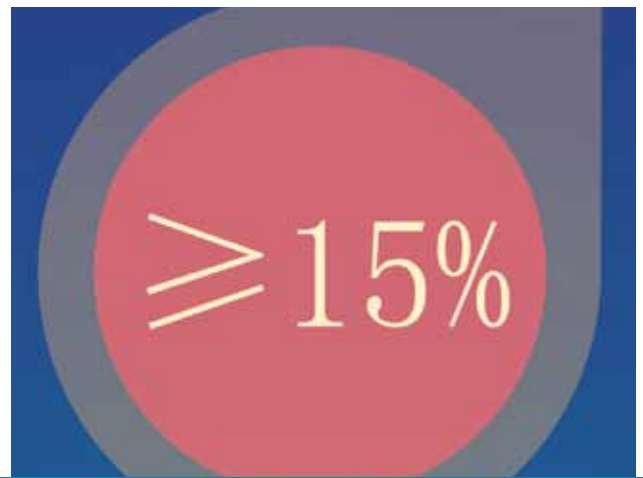


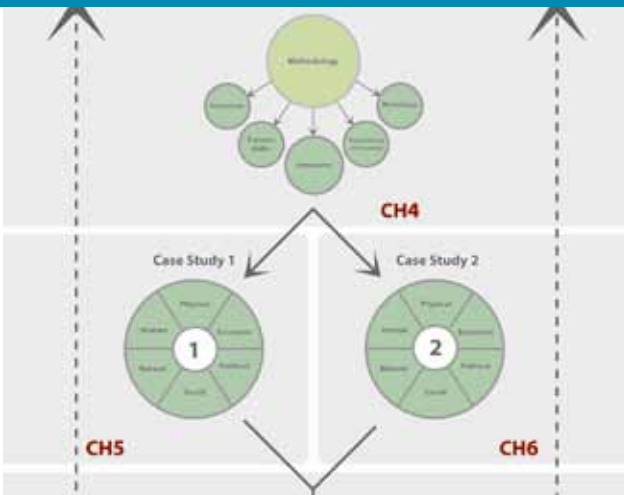
Issue 3

# GRADUATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

The newsletter for our postgraduate research student community



## *Graduate College Online Conference* Opportunities to showcase your work



**PLUS** WELLCOME TRUST AWARD | TEDXCARTHAGE | MINI PLANT TOUR



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*Graduate College Newsletter* is the newsletter for the postgraduate 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 the 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 or 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 Creative Services, Oxford Brookes University.

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)

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## News

# Oxford Brookes alumni announces **publication of his first book**

Former PhD student, **Dr Sebastien Penmellen Boret**, presents 'Japanese Tree Burial' to an audience at the Daiwa Foundation Japan House in London.

On 4 December 2014, Sebastien Boret had the great privilege to launch his first book, 'Japanese Tree Burial: Ecology, Kinship and the Culture of Death', at the Daiwa Foundation Japan House in London.

Having completed his BA in Anthropology from Oxford Brookes in 2003, he returned to the University in 2005 in order to complete a PhD in Anthropology supervised by Professor Joy Hendry and Dr Mitch Sedgwick. Sebastien benefited from the generous support of the Sasakawa Foundation, the Toshiba International Foundation and a three year departmental scholarship from the Department of Anthropology at Oxford Brookes to enable successful completion of his PhD in 2011.

Drawing from five years of research, Sebastien's thesis 'From Social to Ecological Immortality' discussed new forms of ecological cemeteries and the social family, environmental and mortuary changes underlying this practice. While teaching at Oxford University and Stradins University in Latvia, alongside completing his Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) post-doctoral fellowship, Sebastien devoted any spare time to the turning of his doctoral thesis into his first book.

Tree burial, a new form of disposing of the remains of the dead in Japan, was initiated in 1999 by a Zen Buddhist temple in the northeast region of Tohoko. Unlike conventional cemeteries filled with ancestral gravestones, its graveyards are vast woodlands where newly planted trees and small wooden tablets inscribed with the names of the deceased mark the burial sites. Although varying in style and scale, over fifty cemeteries are now popularizing tree burial as an alternative mode of dealing with death in Japan.

Since the publication of 'Japanese Tree Burial', Sebastien was offered a position as Assistant Professor at the International Research Institute of Disaster Sciences (IRIDeS) of Tohoko University, where he is helping to organise the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. His current project, Remembering Disasters, investigates the relationship between memorialisation and social recovery during the aftermath of catastrophes. He is currently preparing a new edited volume on 'The Anthropology of Death in the Early Twentieth Century' and a new book on 'Remembering Global Disasters: The Politics of Memorialisation in Japan and Indonesia'.



### JAPANESE TREE BURIAL

Ecology, Kinship and the Culture of Death

Sébastien Penmellen Boret



## Practical skills grant for BMS student

Shelley Harris, PhD student from the Department of Biological and Medical Sciences, is currently researching the effects of hypothyroidism, more commonly known as underactive thyroid gland, in the fetus of sheep.

In December 2014 she was awarded travel grants from the Physiological Society and the Trust for Research and Education in the Biology of Reproduction totalling £850. She was also awarded a Practical Skills Grant for £2000 from the Society of Endocrinology, which is designed to assist scientists-in-training to visit laboratories to learn techniques or to carry out experiments essential to their projects.

These awards enabled Shelley to travel to the University of Arizona for three weeks in January this year, where she learnt how to isolate and analyse fetal sheep pancreatic islets.



## The MONICA project

Jalawi Alshudukhi, PhD student from the Department of Computing and Communication Technologies, visited Xidian University in Xi'an, Shanxi Province, China from July to September 2014.

The visit was part of the EU FP7 MONICA project, which is co-ordinated by Dr Shumao Ou, Senior Lecturer in Computer Communications and Networks at Brookes. The MONICA project aims to accelerate the transfer and deployment of research knowledge between European countries and China in order to obtain a better understanding of mobile cloud computing, in terms of its networks, services and architecture.

Jalawi worked with Professor Liqiang Zhao of Xidian University and his PhD students in the Chinese State Key Laboratory of Integrated Service Networks. Their work centered on the energy efficiency of ground level wireless sensor communications in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). A joint research paper of their findings has been submitted for consideration.



Mark Galt

## Wellcome Trust Award

PhD student Mark Galt, became aware of the Wellcome Trust's Doctoral Studentship in Medical Humanities while completing his Wellcome Trust funded Master's course, in the History of Medicine at Brookes.

The studentship presented a fantastic opportunity for Mark to pursue his interest in California eugenics, which began while working on the project he produced on a California eugenic research organisation, the Human Betterment Foundation, for the Brookes Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme in 2010.

The extremely competitive award, which Mark successfully achieved in 2014, provides full-time funding for three years of his PhD and covers the cost of the extensive overseas

fieldwork the project requires.

Alongside the tremendous support of Dr Marius Turda, Dr Tom Crook, Dr Carol Beadle and Dr Tudor Georgescu, Mark developed the successful project entitled 'The Plurality of Prevention: Medical Superintendents and the Practices of Compulsory Sterilisation in California State Institutions, 1909-1960'.

Through the examination of institutional files from several California hospitals, Mark's project aims to identify the range of moral and therapeutic convictions held by individual medical superintendents towards the process of sterilisation, and consequently how these assumptions affected the disproportionate implementation of sterilisation across the California state.



New York Public Library

## Research on the Road

Anna Maria Barry, a PhD student within the School of Art's OBERTO: Opera Research Unit, has been awarded several sources of funding to visit UK and international archives. OBERTO, established in 2011 by Dr Alexandra Wilson and Dr Barbara Eichner, provides a forum for the investigation of opera in all its interdisciplinary richness.

Anna, whose research centers on male opera singers of the Nineteenth Century, was awarded £250 from both the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Musical Association, which enabled her to visit a number of American archives in November 2014. She worked with collections in the New York Public Library, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC.

Anna was also the recipient of the 2014 Louise Dyer Award, which was granted by the Musica Britannica Trust. The £500 award allowed Anna to visit operatic archives in both Taunton and Liverpool, where she made significant discoveries. These discoveries have resulted in an exhibition that will take place in Liverpool Central Library in 2016, surrounding the Victorian opera star Sir Charles Santley. Anna will be curating the exhibition as well as delivering several public lectures about him. She will also be constructing a short documentary on Santley's connections with Liverpool, which will be screened in Museums across the city to complement the exhibition.



## TEDxCarthage

Amel Karboul, Minister of Tourism in Tunisia and a DCM student from the Faculty of Business, has received over 15,000 views on YouTube for her TEDx Carthage talk she gave in 2014.

TEDx was created in the spirit of TED's mission, 'ideas worth spreading'. The program was designed to help communities, organisations and individuals, spark conversation and connection through local TED-like experiences.

Amel's talk formed part of the Tunisian event held last year surrounding the theme, 'The Differences We Make'. The event looked to answer questions such as: what kind of difference can one idea, one day or one person make? The realities we live with every day may seem impossible to change, but are we aware of the power that one small difference can make?

## Health and Life Sciences Postgraduate Symposium

January 2014 saw the annual Postgraduate Research Symposium for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, which brings together research students from across the departments. The symposium was divided into two groups, those from Biological and Medical Sciences, and those from Health and Psychology. More than 35 research students showcased their work and 'Professor Nigel Groome Prizes' were awarded for the best poster and oral presentations.

Congratulations to Daniel Leite and Sarah Camp for their oral presentations, and Thomas O'Leary and Hannah Wickenden for their poster presentations. Daan Meister, Julia Birchenough, Dipali Singh and Luca Livraghi were also highly commended for their presentations.

Professor David Evans, Head of the Department of Biological and Medical Sciences, expressed 'The task of the judges was challenging as the oral and poster presentations were of a very high standard, reflecting the emphasis placed within the research degrees programme on transferable skills development'.

# Graduate College Online Conference

The Graduate College Online Conference and live event is taking place this year on 10 June in John Henry Brookes Building, Gipsy Lane. It is open to all research students, whether you are studying for PhD, MPhil, Professional Doctorate or a Masters by Research.



## Why get involved?

Employers and research funders are increasingly asking for evidence of your skills in 'public engagement'; communication through a variety of media with a range of audiences, including networking and the use of social media.

So by taking part in the conference you will gain:

- Advice and experience in presenting your research in poster format or your discipline equivalent to communicate with a broad audience, which is an invaluable skill for conferences, public engagement and more.
- Experience of communicating your research through a 'virtual' environment as the conference takes place on Brookes' Wiki.
- An opportunity to gain feedback and advice on your research and to engage with other research students and research staff.
- An excellent addition to put on your CV and discuss at job interviews
- Submit the poster, or your discipline equivalent, that you have already presented in your faculty conference
- The possibility of winning a cash prize!



Two winners from last year's Graduate College Online Conference, Kimberly Hill from the Department of Psychology, Social Work and Public Health and Joaquim Flores from the School of Architecture, answer questions on their conference experiences.

### What drove you to take part in last year's Graduate College Online Conference?

I took part in last year's Graduate College Online Conference because I had not taken part before. I saw the conference as a challenge, whereby I had to communicate my doctoral research in an accessible and appealing way to non-psychologists using a limited amount of virtual space. – Kimberley Hill

### Did you find it a worthwhile experience?

I found the experience useful and interesting, due to the diversity of topics presented by other researchers.

### What specifically did you take away from the experience?

I received great positive feedback and improved my presentation skills. – Joaquim Flores

### Do you think it is a good way to inform others about the research you are conducting?

I found designing my poster challenging, but interesting. I had only a limited amount of space to define key concepts and terms so had to choose my content carefully. Since taking part in the conference, I have helped to run a poster workshop using my experiences gained from the Graduate College Online Conference. Workshop delegates were interested in how I organised my content and the decisions I made regarding the content I included in my poster.

### Were you provided with all the information you needed in order to take part?

Delegates are provided with all of the information they need to take part in the conference and can even see examples of posters by previous winners.

### Were you familiar with BrookesWiki? If not, did you find entering the conference and submitting your presentation easy?

I had scarcely used BrookesWiki before. However, it was very easy to enter the conference and submit the presentation.

### Did you find it helpful having the opportunity to obtain feedback and advice from fellow research students about your research and presentation?

The feedback received from other researchers is always a must in any research project. It greatly aids in advancing your own development.

### Were you able to utilise work you had previously done in order to enter the conference?

Yes, my presentation was a direct result of work I had previously completed.

### Were you impressed with the cash prize you received?

Having not participated previously, I was not expecting to receive a prize. It proves that the cash prizes are possible for anyone participating.

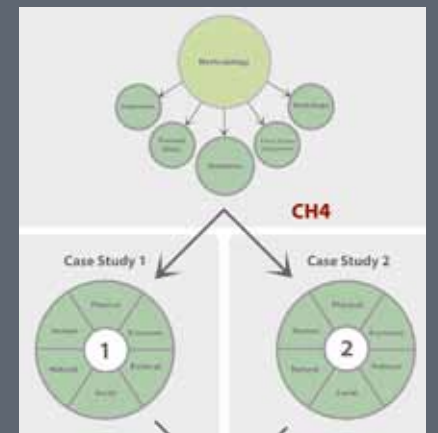
### Would you recommend others to take part, regardless of what stage they are at with their research?

I would recommend all research students to take part, no matter what stage they are at with their research. Communicating knowledge in an accessible and engaging way to a wide audience is an important skill which all researchers should learn.

### Do you have any advice for those research students who haven't yet decided to enter the conference this year?

I would recommend those who have not yet decided to take part, to enter the conference this year. It is an important and rewarding opportunity to present your work, receiving feedback from those you may not normally share your ideas with.

I would advise them to participate. I only participated once during my time at Brookes, which is something I regret. Our tendency is to say we are 'too busy' to participate, but the potential feedback and the networking opportunity is extremely relevant, as well as the possibility of winning a prize.



The conference wiki can be accessed by following 'Brookes Virtual', selecting 'wiki' and logging in. The 'Graduate College Online Conference' is listed on the left hand side of the page. See this site for all additional information and to download an application form to enter.

Please contact Dr Susan Brooks for any further enquiries: [sbrooks@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sbrooks@brookes.ac.uk)

# Research Degree Programmes



**YE WANG**

**FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY,  
DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT**

**'STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION INVOLVING  
COMMUNITIES IN THE URBAN DESIGN  
PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLAND'**

**MA BY RESEARCH JANUARY 2014**

**What attracted you to Oxford Brookes University to conduct your research?**

The Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD) holds a long reputation in Urban Design, Planning, and Real Estate. Both of my supervisors, Professor Georgia Butina Watson and Dr Jon Cooper, are specialists in developing approaches to involve community groups in the improvement of local areas.

**What were you doing before?**

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Part 1 at Plymouth University, placement year at Spratley Studios Ltd, Henley-on-Thames, and RIBA Part 2 at Oxford Brookes University.

**Give an overview of your MA by Research project.**

My research focused on the community engagement and implementation of locally orientated developments. The topic attracted me because participation involving communities has become an increasingly engaging topic in the process of urban design.

The research aimed to examine participatory exercises and the changes this process had incurred in conjunction with the process of urban design, layers of urban morphology, and the encapsulation of intensity of engagement at each planning stage.

My research has contributed a new theoretical approach to knowledge in terms of acceptance of participation fatigue and the need to plan ahead to engage participants. A set of participatory strategic approaches has also been integrated into the framework in order to anticipate changes in the attitudes and views of stakeholder groups in the process of urban design at different planning stages. It is also hoped that these findings and participation approaches will be applicable to other developments, and to the wider study of the relationship between different groups of stakeholders in future developments.

**What did you enjoy about being a Masters by Research student?**

What I enjoyed the most was the research atmosphere, not only in the Faculty but in the City, where people regularly met to listen to some of the most avant-garde of topics and discussions.

**What are your future plans?**

I am planning to use the research from my Masters Degree as the background to my PhD in Urban Design.

Over the years the number of research students, range of topics and degrees conferred has grown consistently at Brookes'. The University has also developed its portfolio of research degree programmes, so in addition to MPhil and PhDs, we now offer Practice Based PhDs, Professional Doctorates and a number of Masters by Research programmes.

Here, along with our regular research student profiles, we speak to a recently graduated Masters by Research student, to gain an inside perspective of one of Brookes' alternative research degree programmes.

**Five research students from across the faculties tell us about their fascinating work in a wide spectrum of investigation.**



**James Shelton**  
**School of Arts**

The title of my PhD is 'Formality & Creativity: An examination of tuition methods within the undergraduate Film Studies degree'.

My research has taken a slightly convoluted route. It has been a long running debate with my advisory team that my project involves a Social Sciences methodology in order to undertake Educational research into Film Studies. This has meant a large amount of time spent designing and defining my interdisciplinary approach. Essentially, my research is an analysis of the undergraduate Film Studies degree course, with a particular focus on tuition and assessment methods, utilising the Film Studies department and degree course at Oxford Brookes as my object of study.

In practice, this meant spending an entire academic year interviewing staff members and graduates about their experiences in and out of the degree program, observing lectures and assessments, and working as an associate lecturer for several courses. The biggest problem with this methodology was the concern of institutional bias; I had completed the Film Studies degree course at Brookes as an undergraduate and was now working for the department. To a certain extent this was unavoidable, but what it did give me was invaluable access to the people and the institution that formed the object of my research.

While my research project began as an ethnographic/pedagogic study, there is a crossover with other areas; the politics of higher education in the humanities, the interaction

between the theoretical and practical aspects of the course, the dialogue between the vocational and the academic areas this covers, and the discussions that all of these create.

At the heart of my research though, are the people I have been observing, interviewing and interacting with. While a quantitative approach would have been possible, based on statistics and documentation, I believe an ethnographic approach, based on the people to whom the course means everything, personally, professionally and academically, brings a fresh perspective to the debates surrounding educational research within the humanities'.

Previous to my studies at Brookes, I was a Business Services Administrator for the Care Quality Commission (CQC). During my time with the CQC I had the responsibility of managing the administrative needs of a rotating caseload, which alternated between 5 and 9 Regulatory Inspectors and 90 and 120 regulated services. Now, through the opportunities my department has offered, both at Brookes and at other organisations such as Film Oxford, I have developed a love of teaching and lecturing. My hope is to find work after completing my PhD that allows me to continue with this. At the same time, I believe my research has a growing relevance and a number of applications within the framework of educational policy analysis, which I would like to channel into a future career.

At the heart of my research though, are the people I have been observing, interviewing and interacting with.



**Melanie Bashor**  
Department of History, Philosophy and Religion

The title of my PhD is 'Engineering Tolerance: Evaluating the Origins of Multicultural Education Policies in the Atlantic World, 1944-1988'.

I first heard about Brookes at a British history conference in Austin, Texas, which is my home state in the USA. Based upon my conversations with the professor and student that attended the conference, and others from their panel, I was inspired to not only look at the university as an option, but eventually apply.

I definitely attribute my attraction to Brookes to the quality of the history researchers and the high standard of their publications. I felt that my project, admittedly a bit on the fringe of several historical themes, would be supported well by my proposed supervisors as well as other members of the University.

My research, through the analysis of incremental and innovative changes to policy, has assessed multicultural education by searching for developmental similarities and linkages between policies in the UK, US, Canada and France. The major find from archival work I have carried out, has been the validation of my theory that the intentions of individual policymakers can be traced from their discussions, into their plans, and through the changes made in response to other policymakers and public outcry. This intentionality can be traced through the notes these individuals have made in the margins of policy papers and in their responses to questions and concerns posed by

constituents and the opposition.

Taking these intentions as a serious portion of policymaking will hopefully lead to an analysis of the development of these policies, and subsequent legislative reforms, as a more evolutionary progression than has been previously understood. Overall, my research plans to determine whether education policy networks between the UK, the US, Canada, and France were transitional and reciprocal rather than outward streams from one country. In this research, I focus on how these countries attempted to rationalise the complexities of their multicultural communities.

This shift into an interconnected transnational framework should broaden the scope of my work's novelty standpoint, as well as expanding my contribution to the field. In particular, seeking to prove a direct correlation between the United Kingdom as a locus for a greater transnational development of multicultural education policies will be an original addition to the discipline.

My welcome to Brookes was incredibly warm, and my supervisors fully supported me in what was a somewhat awkward transition. It felt strange re-entering a 'student-mode' having been Interim Faculty and a member of the lecturing pool at two universities in Texas. However, teaching and research are joys for me, and I have found that I want to remain teaching at university level once I have completed my PhD.

This shift into an interconnected transnational framework should broaden the scope of my work's novelty standpoint, as well as expanding my contribution to the field.



**Ringkar Situmorang**  
Business School

My PhD title is 'Exploring Expatriation and Localisation of Managers in the International Hotel Industry: A Case Study from Jakarta, Indonesia'.

Prior to joining Brookes as a research student in 2012, I was a full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism in Pelita Harapan University, Indonesia for almost six years. Parallel to this, I was Deputy Head of the Hospitality Management Department for 5 years. Before my academic career, I held various positions in a number of companies in the hospitality industry, working my way up from Waiter to Duty Manager in hotels such as Crowne Plaza, Radisson and Marriot.

It was quite challenging for me stepping back into the research environment, as I had not been involved in such a community as a student since I completed my MBA in 2000. I had to become familiar again with research activities and I found that many things had changed. However, the type of research resources available in the UK in comparison to my home country of Indonesia, is incomparable.

During my varied work experience in the hospitality industry, I observed something of the process of selection and recruitment of managers in Indonesia, and often discussed my observations with other professional colleagues. A salient and frequent theme arising from our discussions was the so called 'glass ceiling' phenomenon encountered by our local managers when applying for senior management positions. It appeared common place for local managers to be overlooked in favour of expatriate applicants.

Several years later, when I was preparing to undertake my PhD, this same topic re-emerged as a very promising research area, given that little formal research has been undertaken on the issue of manager localisation in Jakarta. I also believed that such a topic would offer a substantial and valuable contribution to the theory and practice of employment in developing countries, especially in my home country of Indonesia.

My research focuses on how and why expatriate managers may be employed in preference to host country managers in the hotel and tourism industry. Accordingly, the focus has rested on the preferences and approaches of stakeholders in the deploying and developing managerial talent in the International Hotel Industry in Indonesia, as represented in Jakarta. The data for the study will be derived from an investigation of the experiences of host country nationals, along with the practices of expatriate deployment in the industry.

I hope to develop a framework that will illuminate the use of expatriates and the perceived role of local managers in the international hotel industry, and how these findings go on to reflect the expectations and practices of policy makers in Indonesia. Consequently, my belief is, these findings will illustrate the role and influence of both expatriates and local managers on managerial development in the context of the international hotel industry in Indonesia.

My research focuses on how and why expatriate managers may be employed in preference to host country managers in the hotel and tourism industry.



**Cristian Roman**  
Department of Computing and Communication Technologies

My PhD is based on Heterogeneous Wireless Communications in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).

The project is part of the Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment's Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Doctoral Training Program. The program uses an electric quad bike as a test vehicle, which is intended to act either as a self-driving or a remotely controlled vehicle. There are a range of projects working on different aspects of this programme from both the Mechanical Engineering and Mathematical Sciences Department and the Computing and Communication Technologies Department. The projects include electric motor traction control, computer vision and vehicle design for easy disassembly at the end of life. My project is to add a robust and reliable wireless communication link to the vehicle using a technique called heterogeneous wireless communication.

As the use of wireless systems keeps growing, spectrum is becoming increasingly scarce. Currently different wireless technologies such as cellular networks, WiFi, Bluetooth and Zigbee are used separately. The aim of heterogeneous wireless communication is to make best use of the available spectrum regardless of the technology. Systems will be able to select the best available technology or use different technologies in parallel. This will make better use of the available spectrum and lead to improved and more reliable system performance, as well as answering the growing demand for capacity without a massive investment in new infrastructure.

In my project I am designing an adaptive heterogeneous wireless communication link, between the quad bike and its controller. I am considering cellular technologies, such as 3G/4G-LTE (Long Term Evolution), and WiFi. The system will dynamically select the most suitable wireless technology in a given space and time, or may use the technologies jointly to maximise the throughput or improve the reliability that can be achieved with a single radio technology.

Before starting a research degree, I was doing an MSc in Broadband Networks at Brookes and prior to this I studied Computer Science for four years at Supinfo International University, at their Paris and San Francisco Campus. I also completed eighteen months' of internships in various companies across Europe and the US as a Network Administrator or Sales Engineer.

I decided to join Brookes in the quest of a new international experience and to specialise in the Network and Telecommunications field. After completing my MSc, I was offered a scholarship in Wireless Systems for Intelligent Transport Systems from the Brookes ITS group. I was already interested in the field as my MSc dissertation related to the topic, but it was the good working relationship I had established with my supervisors, Dr Peter Ball and Dr Shumao Ou, that fastened my decision to accept. My hope once I have completed my PhD, is to develop my research career by working on a high impact product in the ITS field.

The aim of heterogeneous wireless communication is to make best use of the available spectrum regardless of the technology.



**Samih Kokandi**  
Department of Sport and Health Sciences

My PhD focuses on investigating the role of oral high dose Vitamin D supplementation on asthma outcomes, including lung function, control of symptoms and inflammation in adult asthmatic participants in Saudi Arabia. My research is part of the work undertaken in the Functional Food Centre at Oxford Brookes, which was opened in February 2009.

Prior to joining Brookes as a research student in 2013, I worked for more than three years as a clinical dietician in King Abdul Aziz University Hospital (KAUH). KAUH is one of the largest educational hospitals in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The King Abdul Aziz University is where I completed both my Bachelor and Master's degrees in Human Nutrition.

Many studies have already been conducted on the association between Vitamin D levels and allergic disease, such as asthma. However, there are a lack of studies and trials that investigate the effectiveness of Vitamin D supplementation on disease. There is also a lack of investigation into some of the shortcomings of the clinical trials conducted to study the effectiveness of Vitamin D supplements, such as the shortage in power of study, inadequate Vitamin D supplement or dose, and insufficient time. My study is therefore an interventional study.

Vitamin D deficiency is a serious problem in Saudi Arabia, although it is a sunny country. According to a large study conducted recently, Vitamin D deficiency and insufficiency were found in 80-90% of Saudi Arabia's population, which included both male and female participants. Alongside this extremely high rate of Vitamin D deficiency in Saudi

Arabia, asthma is strikingly widespread. For these reasons, I decided to enrol my sample of adult asthmatic participants aged 18 to 60 years from Saudi.

Vitamin D is an important component of human health, responsible for enhancing intestinal absorption of calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphate and zinc. Calcium homeostasis, the mechanism by which the body maintains adequate calcium levels, is the classic function of Vitamin D. My research focuses on the non-classical effects of Vitamin D, mainly its immunological effects. More specifically, my research is aimed to investigate the effect of oral high dose Vitamin D supplements (200 000 IU) on a) airway inflammation in asthma participants, and b) lung function and control of symptoms in asthma participants.

My dream was to carry out a PhD in my field. This dream turned into a reality when I enrolled as a research student at Oxford Brookes. My plan, once I have completed my PhD, is to gain an academic post at King Abdul Aziz University and to carry on researching as a part time dietician, specialising in allergic disease.

For more current research student profiles please visit:

[www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/current-students/graduate-college/student-profiles/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/current-students/graduate-college/student-profiles/)

Vitamin D is an important component of human health, responsible for enhancing intestinal absorption of calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphate and zinc.

# Stay connected

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



## MINI Plant Tour

Early February saw the first event in the Graduate College Events Programme for Semester 2 transpire; a private guided tour of the birthplace and heart of MINI production. Plant Oxford is a site with 100 years of automotive manufacturing history, with more than 2.5 million cars having been manufactured since production of the new MINI began in 2001.

With assistance from John, the friendly and informative MINI Plant tour guide, a group of Brookes' research students took a 2 hour guided tour of the Oxford based plant. They experienced major elements of production, from the welding of steel parts into car bodies to the individual interior equipment in the assembly.

Those students who attended had many positive things to say, with one exclaiming that 'the MINI Plant itself was amazing!' and Andrea Tolmie (pictured right), a PhD student from the Department of Biological and Medical Sciences, proclaiming it was all about the robots!

We're always open to new suggestions for our events, so if you would like to share your thoughts or simply get involved please email: [asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:asa-gcevents@brookes.ac.uk)

## Impact Conference

As research students, the impact of your research has become increasingly important. The impact of your research project is its wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

### Do you think your research is potentially impactful? Show us how!

Brookes is organising a university-wide conference on Impact and are offering all Postgraduate Research Students and Early Career Fellows the chance to produce an academic poster showing in which way(s) your research has an impact. This is an excellent opportunity for you to broadcast your work to other conference participants, fellow postgraduates and experts in your field, as well as competing for a range of fantastic prizes.

The conference will take place on Friday 2 October 2015 and all submissions must be made by 31 August 2015 to [naubert@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:naubert@brookes.ac.uk)

For all informal enquiries please also contact Professor Nathalie Aubert: [naubert@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:naubert@brookes.ac.uk).

## Launch of the New Graduate College Web Pages!

January this year saw the unveiling of the new Graduate College Web Pages. The Graduate College is the virtual embodiment of Brookes' research student community; organising and supporting networking and social events, publicising success stories and student profiles, and providing the necessary platforms so each and every research student has a voice.

Get connected and see what the Graduate College have to offer: [www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/current-students/graduate-college/](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/research-degrees-team/current-students/graduate-college/)

Plus Graduate College Blog coming soon!



# A year in the life

**ISTVAN ZARDAI**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

Follow the experiences of one of Brookes PhD students through a year of their research.

Istvan's study deals with pluralism about the concept of action.

This article might be of interest to current and prospective PhD students, other research students and their supervisors. It gives an insight into the magnitude of opportunities and experiences available to research students during their studies, along with the accompanying challenges they face.

I have been running long distances now for five years. I like running because it continually fosters new challenges and requires a build-up of strength over time. In both of these respects it is similar to research – it is an enjoyable long-term challenge that can never be exhausted, and where one can always aim higher. The last year epitomises this continual race like quality of my life as a PhD student.

The academic year started with a trip to the University of Pécs in Hungary. Their Philosophy Department offered me the chance to teach a course on Moral Psychology, which looks at topics such as altruism vs egoism, the influence of character on behaviour vs. the influence of circumstance, weakness of will etc. It was an incredibly intense course, delivering double seminars five days in a row. I also gave a talk at their college for Advanced Undergraduate and Graduate Studies on AI and Responsibility, more specifically on what is problematic about the idea of building robots that have reasoning skills similar to humans, and consequently sending them to war.

Once back in Oxford things continued at the same lively pace, with two new visiting researchers joining the Philosophy team for half the year, and organising the international conference on Free Will, Determinism and Responsibility with fellow research student Esther Shalan. For the Conference we secured seven world-class speakers from the US and Israel, as well as a fantastic venue with the help of an acquaintance at the Queen's College, Oxford.

The Conference took place in March, and thanks to the effective support of my supervisor Professor Constantine Sandis, along with

Professor Christiana Payne, Claire Cox and Vicky Hatcher, everything went smoothly. There was a turnout of approximately 90 people on both days and we received numerous thanks from both attendees and speakers after the event regarding its organisation.

During this period I also had the opportunity to present my own research at the University of Tokyo, giving a talk entitled "How to Handle Actions?". The talk discussed how to give the best metaphysical characterisation of activities i.e. what agents are engaged in while they are acting. It was received very well and gave me many helpful suggestions towards my research. Travelling to Japan also gave me the opportunity to spend some time with my partner in her native country and to explore Kyoto, Nagoya and Tokyo.

In the spring I had two more teaching opportunities. The Royal Institute of Philosophy organises teacher training sessions, and their Jacobsen scheme offers secondary schools the opportunity to invite a PhD student to present a series of lectures. I did both the training and teaching components; delivering a total of 10 classes to 6th and 7th year students at the Culhum European School on virtue ethics and feminism. The latter topic I believe is especially important these days when so many malicious misunderstandings of the substantial claims of feminism are in circulation.

I also performed as Assistant Editor of the Philosophy of Action section of PhilPapers, and was elected as fundraiser for the British Philosophy Postgraduate Association.

All-in all, I had a very intense year, with lots of great experiences and numerous opportunities to discuss my research with people in my field.

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