

January 2010 Issue

# Nexus

Connecting the University community



**ROBERT GORDON  
UNIVERSITY • ABERDEEN**

New Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery

Student survey results

December graduation round-up

## Partnership programme recognised at National Training Awards

It was a night of celebrations and fireworks in the nation's capital for the School of Applied Social Studies and Aberdeen Business School in November.

Representatives from both Schools attended the prestigious National Training Awards (Scotland) in Edinburgh Castle on 5<sup>th</sup> November to receive the 'Partnership and Collaboration' award. This was awarded in recognition of a bespoke training programme created in collaboration with The Taylor Clarke Partnership Ltd, a Glasgow based leadership and organisational development consultancy.

'Leading to Deliver' is a postgraduate course designed specifically to help Social

Services managers across Scotland focus on leadership, change, service delivery and partnership working. The programme tackles leadership and management capabilities enabling managers to become competent and confident leaders.

Professor Joyce Lishman, Head of the School of Applied Social Studies, commented, "Five hundred managers in Social Services successfully undertook the course, and feedback has been extremely positive. The collaboration between the Business School, the School of Applied Social Studies and The Taylor Clarke Partnership has been innovative and highly successful."

Laurence Clarke, Managing Director at the Taylor Clarke Partnership Ltd said, "Our partnership with Robert Gordon University

has helped us to create a really unique training programme, and the support which they have provided us has helped to give us a different vision."



Professor Joyce Lishman Head of School of Applied Social Studies, and Linda Strangward, Research Assistant of the Department of Management displaying their National Training Award.

## High-profile environmentalist launches new Centre



The University launched its newly established Centre for Understanding Sustainability in Practice (CUSP) with an inaugural public lecture by esteemed broadcaster, writer and speaker, Dr Gabrielle Walker, on Monday 30 November.

The lecture, entitled 'Sustainability and the Future', aimed to explore the importance of sustainable development in both local and global contexts.

Dr Walker addressed guests from industry and academia on the need for behavioural change in addition to technological advances, highlighting the need to keep economic, environmental, social and political issues in equal focus.

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Dr Alan Owen, Director of the new Centre, with Dr Walker

## THIS ISSUE

Welcome to January's issue of the University's magazine, Nexus. This issue sees a double page spread focusing on December's graduation ceremonies and the University's activities with the wider community. As is becoming a regular feature, two pages are also dedicated to a plethora of student successes across the University.

Please get in touch if you have any suggestions for stories or features for the magazine. Email your ideas to [g.caie@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:g.caie@rgu.ac.uk). You can also use this address to contact me if you would like copies of any photos included in Nexus.

The deadline for articles to be included in the February issue is Thursday 14 January.

**Gail Caie**  
**Senior Communications Officer**

## SPECIAL FEATURES

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Community engagement

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# RGU PEOPLE

Professor Brian Webster



## University appoints new Head of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor Brian Webster has joined the University as Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Brian joins the University from his previous role as Deputy Head of School and Director of Education within the School of Health Sciences at the University of Southampton. There, he was responsible for nearly 250 members of staff, and looked after all the School's educational contracts, worth around £27m.

He said, "I am delighted to take up this appointment. A focus on student centred education was very important to me at the University of Southampton, and I hope to help bring this forward here too. A lot of significant work has been done on enhancing the student experience for student nurses at Robert Gordon University, and I think we can continue to build on this by working alongside our practice partners."

Expanding postgraduate provision and developing the international market are also high on Brian's agenda. He explains, "Nursing is moving towards becoming an all-graduate profession, so we need to offer more postgraduate opportunities around advanced clinical practice for the graduate profession. The first cohort of students is soon to graduate from the School's Masters courses, and they have demonstrated how further study can feed into some fantastic initiatives across all areas of the nursing profession."

# RGU PEOPLE



## Research highlighted in striking Scottish tour

Pioneering research at Aberdeen's two universities was featured in a new photographic exhibition of dramatically striking images which are set to 'change our tomorrow'.

*Where Tomorrow Begins: Reflections of Scottish Innovation*, showcases examples of innovation taking place in Scotland's universities, placing them at the forefront of knowledge, research and technology, to tackle the big issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One of the pieces exhibited from Robert Gordon University illustrates the purification of polluted drinking water using light and a wave.

Scotland has an abundance of the world's most valuable liquid asset: clean water. Much of the rest of the planet is less fortunate and approximately three million people die annually as a result of water-related diseases. By 2025, it is predicted that two thirds of the world's population will experience chronic water shortages.

Researchers at the University have developed an advanced photochemical technology that could help. The process uses a material called a photocatalyst that, when illuminated with light, can completely destroy the pollutants in water. The treatment is low-energy and non-toxic, offering a safe and effective solution to the global water challenge.

Another image shows how researchers will track pollutants to prevent contamination.

Industrialisation and the expanding human population have created a well-documented catalogue of environmental problems, generating increasing demand for improved solutions. The University has developed a small portable pollution detection device featuring bright non-toxic tracers. Each tracer emits light to detect the presence and movement of pollutants – even in tiny quantities – in a variety of sites including harbours, marine and freshwater environments and sewage treatment works. The brightness of tracers means that an individual pollutant can be carefully monitored, and its source of origin pinpointed, allowing scientists to prevent potentially dangerous future damage.

The exhibition was on display at the city's Satrosphere Science Centre as part of a national tour.

## Hand bags and glad rags at Gray's School of Art

The recent works of fashion and textiles students from Gray's School of Art were showcased in an exhibition in the School's foyer in November.

Stage three Textiles students came together with the stage two Fashion Design class for their first exhibition, combining a number of exciting themes. The Textiles students have been trying to come up with original and innovative ideas that could mark the beginning of a new commercial brand, whilst Fashion students have been looking over the classic cuts of the 1950s to inspire their latest collection of garments.

One of the Fashion design students was Ashley Duncan who has used aubergine satin as the basis for her extravagant 50s-style cocktail dress.

Jenna McLaren is also studying fashion. She opted for a red 'duchess' satin with big puffy sleeves and a large bow to make her garment really stand out.



Jenna and Ashley pose at Gray's School of Art with their models Kirsty MacLeod and Georgina Still.

## Up to 5k Funding for Scottish SMEs

**The University can now offer up to £5,000 per project to directly support collaboration with Scottish small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).**

This award is to encourage new partnerships that have not jointly received funding from any source previously for the proposed project in order to build links between Scotland's HEI and SMEs. Therefore, this is a perfect opportunity for SMEs who have previously expressed interest in tapping into the University's academic expertise to solve a particular business problem or meet a particular business goal, but who have had trouble finding the funds.

The application deadline date is 9 April, 2010. Research and development activities to be carried out under the award must be completed by 31 July 2010. If chosen, a partner SME is expected to provide match funding for the project.

For more information contact Anne Humphrey, Business Development Officer, CREDO at [a.humphrey@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:a.humphrey@rgu.ac.uk).



Sue Fairburn

## From subsea to Space School: Lecturer sees gap for learning

**Gray's School of Art lecturer Sue Fairburn has played a key role in the Skills Development Scotland's Scottish Space School visit to Houston, Texas, in November, where 14 young people from across Scotland were given the chance to visit NASA's Space Centre.**

Sue, who is originally from Western Canada and has a background in the study of environmental physiology and international health, is now a Lecturer in Product Design at the School. As Design Advisor for the Skills Development School, Sue was working to develop a new model for the Scottish Space School.

She said, "I'd like to see the Space School become more accessible for all. I think the study of space technology is particularly relevant here in Aberdeen, the oil capital of Europe, as a lot of the technology used in space is similar to that needed for subsea exploration. It's all related to closed loop living – right down to safety suits, the support that researchers need in order to survive in remote settings is the same whether they are subsea, in space, or even in Antarctica."

The ten S5 pupils and four Modern Apprentices who took part in the Space School were selected on their academic abilities. As an extra-curricular project, they completed a space module and had to put forward a written submission. As well as visiting NASA's Space Centre, they had the chance to rub shoulders with astronauts and engineers at a variety of events and workshops.

## 'Civil yins' make the most of Scots Law with mediation event

**Legal eagles gathered at Aberdeen Business School on 12<sup>th</sup> November to investigate the pros and cons of dealing with legal disputes outside the courtroom. The free event was co-ordinated by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in collaboration with the School's Department of Law.**

As the judicial system continues to burst at the seams with an incredible volume of cases, mediation is becoming a more favourable way of settling disputes. Alternative dispute resolution has been largely ignored by courts in the past, but the event intended to raise awareness of the benefits of encouraging mediation among lawyers and other professionals, such as those in the HR, oil and gas, construction and property sectors. Since mediation has been given a push south of the border, the number of cases resolved in this way has increased from 300 to 3000 in just 18 months, and this is proving extremely effective.

The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators event included a live demonstration of mediation in action, followed by a discussion on its role within civil and employment disputes, in the hope that practising professionals will see the benefits of highlighting mediation as an option to their clients.

## School teams aim for new ideas in waste management

**Eleven school teams from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire attended the Go4SET Launch Day on the 6<sup>th</sup> November to take part in the new round of the Go4SET programme, hosted by the University. Each participating school entered a team of six S2 pupils who were supported by their teacher and a company mentor throughout the project.**

The theme this year was 'waste and your environment'. The teams were tasked to conduct a waste audit in their school and produce an account of the waste collection and treatment sites in their local district or town, in order to understand how the local waste sector operates. They also visited their mentor companies, BP, Amec, ConocoPhillips, WellOps and TOTAL to investigate how they handle the amount of waste they produce.

All the teams worked on the same project brief over a period of 10 weeks. The programme culminates in early March with a Celebration & Assessment Day, which will provide an opportunity for pupils to display and demonstrate their individual projects to a group of assessors and guests attending the event.

### continued from page 1:

Dr Walker, previously Features Editor of New Scientist Magazine, is now a presenter for BBC Radio, and writes for newspapers and magazines on issues such as climate change and energy. The host of flagship Radio 4 series, 'Planet Earth Under Threat', she also co-authored climate change book, 'The Hot Topic', described by ex-US Vice President Al Gore as, "a beacon of clarity in a world of misinformation."

The lecture was chaired by prominent oil and gas journalist Jeremy Cresswell, founder and Chairman of Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group and Honorary Professor at Aberdeen Business School.

The new Centre, which Dr Walker assisted in launching, aspires to educate and inspire people to embrace sustainable practice in their daily lives in a time where issues such as climate change and energy efficiency are at the forefront of important global issues.



(from left to right) - Geoff Clark, Partner at Paull and Williamsons; winning students Robert and Katie with their trophy, and Bruce Smith, also of Paull and Williamsons.

## 'Mootivational' competition brings success for law students

The finalists in the annual Mooting Competition battled it out for the winning trophy in December, in an event held at the state-of-the-art mock courtroom facility at Aberdeen Business School.

Law students from all stages are involved in the annual competition. Eight teams of budding legal eagles were whittled down to two for the much-anticipated final, and Robert Templeton and Katie Irving were delighted to be part of the winning team.

The competition concentrates on the students' understanding of the law and mooting skills, and the winning team is decided based on the quality of their debating. The duo picked up the winning trophy, sponsored by Aberdeen law firm Paull and Williamsons, as well as a cash prize.

## Participants needed for groundbreaking witness research

Aberdeen Business School is looking for volunteers to assist in a project investigating the reliability of information collected from witnesses in the courtroom. Funded by the Clark Foundation for Legal Education, this is the first research project of its kind to be conducted in the UK.

The experiment has been underway for several months with a first round of volunteers, and preliminary results drawing some very interesting conclusions. In order to complete the study and make the results of this law reform enquiry as reliable and influential as possible, many more volunteers are now required to take part.

The Departments of Law and Psychology would like volunteers to assist in two sessions of approximately 45 minutes. The first is an introductory briefing held at Aberdeen Business School, where the research is explained further and participants are asked to complete a series of questionnaires.

The second session will consist of a hands-on experience at Aberdeen Sheriff Court on Union Street, Aberdeen, concluding with participants answering questions about the process.

Those who attend both sessions will be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win £150 worth of gift vouchers and a multi-media player worth over £100. Participants will also be able to obtain a copy of the research findings.

Travel expenses will also be reimbursed, and the School will be looking for volunteers into at least Spring. For further information on the project, contact the Principal Investigator, Derek Auchie on [d.p.auchie@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:d.p.auchie@rgu.ac.uk) or 01224 263425.

## University sets benchmark for nursing education in Belgium

**The University hosted a visit by academics from a leading Belgian university in November, with a view to helping its European counterpart to develop its nursing programmes.**

Lieve Ternier, Monique Ratajczak, Joep Grosemans, Nadia Segers and Wendy Danko from Provinciale Hogeschool, Limburg (PHL), Belgium, were in Aberdeen to meet with Professor Brian Webster, the newly appointed Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and other leading academics from the University.

Linked through Erasmus, the European Commission's flagship educational programme for Higher Education students, teachers and institutions, the Belgian contingent spent time looking at quality management within nursing education, practical training assessment within the field and international co-operation within the midwifery sector.

In addition to visiting the Faculty of Health and Social Care building and seeing presentations by nursing and midwifery students, the group also visited a variety of clinical areas within NHS Grampian to monitor available clinical learning opportunities for Belgian student nurses and midwives.



Members of staff from both institutions come together (from left to right): Neil Johnson; Lieve Ternier (Belgium); Alison McLennan; Jean Cowie; Joep Grosemans (Belgium); Carol Jackson; Avril Milne; Prof. Brian Webster; Wendy Danko (Belgium); Nadia Segers (Belgium); Martyn Main; Monique Ratajczak (Belgium); Gavin Innes; Liz Law and Susan Gibb.

# GRADUATION DECEMBER 2009



## Honorary degree for former Poet Laureate

**Professor Sir Andrew Motion was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters.**

In 1980, Andrew became editor of the *Poetry Review* and, in 1982, produced the *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* in collaboration with Blake Morrison. He also produced critical works on two poets who have influenced him particularly, Edward Thomas and Philip Larkin. Between 1982 and 1989, he was Editorial Director and Poetry Editor at Chatto and Windus. During this time, he published three collections his own verse, *Secret Narratives*, *Dangerous Play* and *Natural Causes*. He also won the Somerset Maugham Award for his biography, *The Lamberts: George, Constant and Kit*.

In 1996, Andrew took a post at the University of East Anglia and, since 2003, has been Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. In 1999, following the death of Ted Hughes, Andrew was appointed Poet Laureate, a post held by the likes of Dryden, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Betjeman.

## Social work graduate Frankie continues inspiring

**Frankie McLean has overcome immense challenges in his journey to graduate with a BA (Hons) Social Work.**

Despite being profoundly Deaf, Frankie attended mainstream schooling and graduated from Strathclyde University with a BSc (Hons) in Immunology and Pharmacology. Although he enjoyed the course Frankie realised that it wasn't the career for him.

Following a stint as a lifelong learning development officer for a charity, Frankie became an Information, Advice and Guidance Worker for Deaf Action, attached to their social work team.

Frankie was drawn to social work which led him to taking up a place as a distance learning student with the University, which enabled him to combine working with his studies.

In order to complete the course, Frankie required the services of a sign language interpreter which the School provided. He said, "The School didn't shirk from this challenge. Luck also had it that the School had a lecturer on staff, Sheila Slesser, who had worked as a social worker with Deaf people for many years and who could sign. She became my personal tutor and has taught me a great deal."

Frankie is now working as a fully registered and qualified social worker for Deaf Action.

## Graduating with distinction to build a new career

**Ian Morgan travelled from his home in the French Alps to graduate with a MSc in Property Development.**

After a few years working overseas for tour operators, Ian took his first degree at Thames Valley University in London, where he graduated with a Tourism/Business degree. Subsequently he worked in sales and marketing, followed by several years in European event management, specialising in large international commercial exhibitions.

He said, "As a result of the technical, construction focus, I developed a keen interest in buildings and architectural design and I thought it would be fun to combine personal and commercial interests."

So Ian left his job and set about learning the basics of construction, building a two room extension to his home with nothing more than the help of a friend, a borrowed cement mixer and a copy of autocad LT!

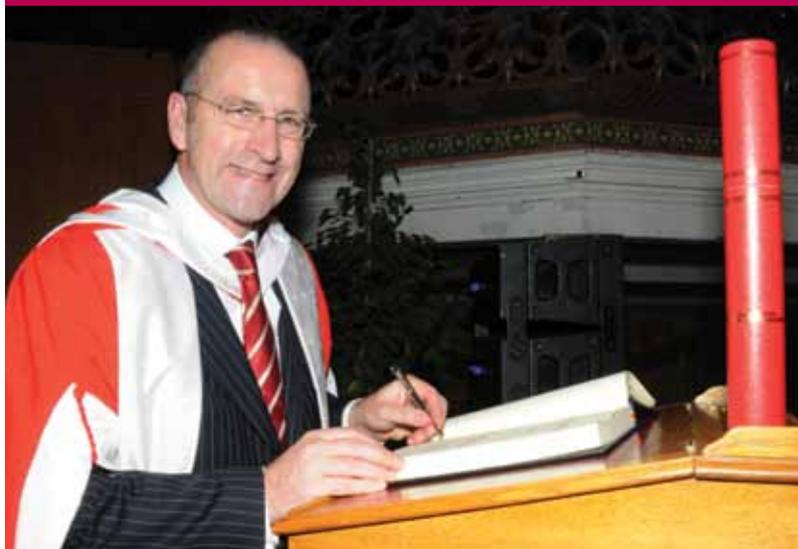
It was then that Ian applied and was accepted to the University's Property Development programme.

Unexpectedly, Ian has now become interested in academia itself, and plans to use his new skills in active property development in France, as well as pursuing an academic career with a research degree/doctorate and perhaps teaching.

## Fairfield Chief Executive recognised

**Mark McAllister was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Technology. Mark is Chief Executive of Fairfield Energy. He had previously been a member of the senior management team at LASMO plc and was Managing Director, Europe and North Africa, at the time of the acquisition of LASMO by Eni in 2001. Previously Mark had been on the executive team at Monument Exploration where he was Director of Operations.**

Led by Mark McAllister, Fairfield was created to pursue opportunities provided by the restructuring of asset ownership in the UKCS, as the majors and other long-term acreage holders began to shift their focus to different parts of the world. Fairfield is an innovative upstream oil producer focused on the appraisal and development of hydrocarbon accumulations in the North Sea.



## Computing student works to improve performance of popular search engine

**A student who graduated with a Masters from the School of Computing has found a way to improve the performance of one of the world's leading search engines.**

Using the spare cycles of the computers at the University, Maryam Kontagora ran a myriad of concurrent MapReduce jobs to simulate hundreds of users searching and sorting on Google at the same time, ultimately improving the results of these searches.

An article based on the findings she has put together for her Masters dissertation has been accepted at a top international conference. The IEEE International Conference on Complex, Intelligent and Software Intensive Systems (CISIS), to be held at Krakow, in February 2010 will give Maryam a forum in which to showcase her findings.

## Univation duo celebrate graduation success

**Two members of Univation staff graduated from Aberdeen Business School. UK Business Development Manager, Pamela Neri, qualified with a MBA and her colleague, Julie Pittman, who is Operations Team Leader, achieved the award of Graduate Certificate Management.**

Pamela began her MBA in 2006. She explained, "Working in a university environment, I wanted to prove to myself that I could achieve an MBA. It has given me greater confidence in dealing with colleagues in the University and corporate clients."

Julie Pittman oversees the delivery of academic and training programmes to corporate clients. She said, "I decided to study the Graduate Certificate as part of my personal development. As we are delivering this programme to a number of corporate clients, it was useful to understand the learning process that corporate students are experiencing."



## Career Boost for Mental Health Nurses

**A group of employees of NHS Grampian Mental Health Services graduated from a 'one-off' government-funded course to obtain a second professional qualification as first level Registered Mental Health Nurses.**

The Diploma of Higher Education in Mental Health Nursing lasted 18 months, and was provided as a result of the challenges NHS Grampian were experiencing at the time to recruit qualified mental health nurses.

The students were Kate Law, Amanda Fleming and Julie Kennedy. They already have qualifications as registered adult nurses or as second level registered nurses and continued to fulfil their full time jobs whilst undertaking the course. The course was designed to be work-based and flexible, and used a blended learning approach that also gave eligibility to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council in a shorter time than is usually required.



## 'Best Gaelic singer' awarded Doctor of Music

**Karen Matheson was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Music. Karen is widely recognised as the woman behind the haunting vocals of Celtic super-group Capercaillie. She was given an OBE in the 2006 New Years Honours list, an astonishing achievement to add to her award of 'Best Gaelic singer' from the inaugural Scottish folk awards.**

Capercaillie have sold more than a million albums across the world, performed in over thirty countries and written and starred in the blockbuster movie 'Rob Roy', with Liam Neeson and Jessica Lange, in which Karen performed a solo rendition of a Gaelic lament.

Karen has released three solo albums, *The Dreaming Sea*, *Time to Fall* and *Downriver*, providing the perfect platform for the vocal delights that have stunned audiences around the world and introduced the beautiful Gaelic language to countless thousands of people.

## William nets top degree and job

**William West combined his football career with his MEng Mechanical Engineering.**

William managed to pass his Honours exams whilst playing centre midfield for Highland League side, Fraserburgh in a cup final against Inverurie Locos! Although Fraserburgh lost 2-1, William went on to pass his exams with flying colours.

As part of his studies, William also completed a work experience placement with Petrofac, and has now accepted a full-time position with the energy company, as a graduate mechanical engineer.

He said, "I think the opportunity to carry out a placement whilst at university is crucial. Not only did I receive industrial experience in the Petrofac offices, but I was fortunate enough to be put through my survival course by Petrofac and visit the Heather and Thistle platforms, which are operated by them. Travelling on helicopters, familiarising myself with being on an offshore platform, and generally getting used to the surroundings offshore has been an invaluable experience."

# STUDENT SUCCESSES



## Students go blue for Children In Need!

A group of charitable students from the RGU: RAG (Raising and Giving) Society raised over £500 for Children In Need by dressing as Smurfs for a day in November.

Students attended classes across the University in costume and then held a sponsored conga line from RGU: Union through the city streets.

Steph Dowling, Secretary of RGU: RAG, comments, "Students love any excuse to dress up, so we thought attending university as Smurfs would catch people's attention and get them to donate to Children In Need."

The Society raised over £3000 for various charities last term, with an underwear fashion show at local nightclub Tiger Tiger, a Fresher's Barbeque and even a sponsored headshave!

Lydia Fyall, Student Development and Volunteering Co-ordinator for the University, said, "Student volunteering raises valuable funds and awareness for local and national charities, whilst enhancing students CVs. There are over 250 registered volunteers at the University and it's great to see students having fun and getting involved to raise money for Children In Need, a really worthwhile cause."

## Team work is top of Council agenda for annual C-MAR Award recipient

**An Aberdeen Business School student has been recognised by global marine and energy services company, C-MAR Group, as the 'Best Overall Honours Year Student' on the part-time BA Honours Management degree course.**

Jane Hunter, the winner of the C-MAR sponsored award, achieved the best marks in her year across all her modules, and received a trophy for her efforts.

Jane completed the course whilst working full-time at Northfield Academy. Since embarking on her degree, she has progressed from her role as School Administrator to become School Support Services Manager.

As a member of Aberdeen City Council staff, Jane decided to focus her dissertation on the psychological contract shared by employees and their employers, using the Council as a case study. This relates to how a member of staff perceives what they should do for a company and what the company should do for them. The local authority had implemented a job evaluation exercise and Jane became intrigued to find out whether this was impacting on employees' commitment to their work and their knowledge-sharing attitudes and behaviours.

Andrew Macdonald, Group Operations Director at C-MAR, said, "We are delighted to be able to recognise and reward Jane's hard work and achievement. The industries we operate in face very real skills shortages, and institutions such as the University are vital in assisting people develop their talents and skills."



Jane receiving her Award from Andrew Macdonald.

## CTRL Byte: Computing students launch new society

**The School of Computing has launched a new student computing society coined 'CTRL Byte' by the group of 17 members who are now signed up.**

The Society is already off to a great start with two mindstorm Lego robots, after the University's Alumni Fund contributed £360 to the cause. This will allow participants in the new group to take part in Lego NXT programming, one of the areas they decided was important to them when they first met to discuss plans. They will be able to explore the basics of robotics and have even considered developing the robots to partake in an internal Lego NXT Sumo Wrestling Competition. The Society now also has a Teamwork Study Area on Moodle, the University's virtual learning environment, to allow them to discuss their thoughts between meetings.

The Alumni Fund is made up of donations from alumni who collectively provide life changing opportunities for students.

Jenny Brown, Alumni Manager, said, "The Fund allows our students to broaden their professional experience by taking part in placement opportunities in the UK and overseas, learn new skills at industry focussed workshops and seminars, access specialised training and receive support whilst studying. By going the extra mile for our students, we are providing them with the competitive edge when entering the market place."

Lecturer Daniel Doolan, who helped get the Society off the ground alongside fellow staff member Niccolo Capanni, explained, "We thought that having a computing society would be beneficial for students, especially in light of the fact that there are so many competitions worldwide that students could support each other in taking part in. It's not just about competitions, though, it provides the student members with a chance to have some fun and make new friends."

For more information, contact Daniel on 01224 262723 or [d.c.doolan@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.doolan@rgu.ac.uk)



## People watching is focus for Masters project

**Masters students from Gray's School of Art have been putting their people-watching skills to the test as part of a collaborative project 'Observing the Everyday'.**

Working in small groups, the students were asked to come up with different ways of analysing human behaviour in the urban environment so that they could gain a new way of seeing the everyday. They were then tasked with coming up with a stimulating and informative presentation in order to relay their findings.

Each group took a unique approach to the task. One team observed a flashmob at Aberdeen's Union Square where around 300 people lay down in the shopping centre and pretended to sleep for five minutes as onlookers stood startled.

Another went about constructing and decorating wooden frames that illustrate past, present and future, and placed these in one of Aberdeen's main thoroughfares, on a stretch of pavement outside His Majesty's Theatre (HMT). Hiding in nearby areas such as a telephone box, in order to remain inconspicuous, the group has been able to record how individuals react to their eye-catching and mind-boggling props.

The students involved in the people watching exercise outside HMT were Nicolas Rossert, Shona Madigan, and Mat Van Den Art.

Iain Irving, Course Leader for the Masters programme at Gray's School of Art, said, "The project is intended to encourage risk and experimentation in the students' creative ideas. Primary knowledge and inspiration is achieved through the observation and experience of things, and this is a great way for them to explore new ideas."

## Students' excellence in well intervention is rewarded by ICoTA

**Each year, the Intervention and Coiled Tubing Association European Chapter (ICoTA) rewards academic excellence in the discipline of well intervention. This year, two substantial cash prizes have again been awarded to postgraduate students on well intervention-related MSc courses at the School of Engineering.**

The prize for Best Overall Drilling and Well Engineering Student went to Ndukwe Chima. Winner of the award for the Best Overall Student in the Advanced Well Engineering module was Nnamdi Obinna.

Frank Rattray from Marathon Oil and Chairman of ICoTA, presented the students with their prizes at the SPE ICoTA 15<sup>th</sup> European Well Intervention Round Table in Aberdeen in November.

Mr Rattray said, "Our aim in awarding these prizes is to recognise the best, and most committed students studying on Well Intervention-related MSc Courses at Robert Gordon University. This year, I'm very pleased to be able to announce that again, two outstanding students have been selected. They will each receive a cash prize and membership of ICoTA for 2010."

Libby Day, a graduate from Gray's School of Art, has launched Celebrate a new independent jewellery and 3D workshop and teaching facility at The Loft, Cotton Street, Aberdeen.



## Double graduate scoops Martin Richmond Award

**Double Design and Technology graduate, Corrie Ewart, is the recipient of the fourth Martin Richmond Award by The Society for Underwater Technology (SUT), in association with JPK Caledonia Ltd.**

The Award is presented annually to a mature postgraduate student from Robert Gordon University or the University of Aberdeen, who is currently employed in the energy sector and has performed most diligently throughout their course under extraneous or mitigating personal circumstances. The Award is in memory of Martin Richmond, who died from cancer in January 2006 at the age of 52. Martin was employed by JPK Caledonia Ltd, and at the time of his death was Chairman of the Aberdeen Branch of the SUT.

Award winner Corrie graduated from the University for the second time with Distinction in July 2009, with an MSc Oil and Gas Engineering. He completed his first degree in Quantity Surveying at RGIT in 1993, but opted for a change of career in 1998.

Corrie has been working on the MSc whilst in full-time employment with BP. He picked a unique piece of artwork by a student of Gray's School of Art who received £500 for their efforts.

The Award was formally presented to Corrie, along with the artwork, by Mrs Anne Richmond at the SUT's AGM and Dinner in December at The Marcliffe at Pitfodels.

(left to right): David Liddle, Anne Richmond, Corrie Ewart and Events Manager from SUT, Michele Ross.





Barbara Jones receiving her Award.

## Ambassadors recognised at business tourism awards

**Business leaders and academics who have helped bring in conference business worth more than £11million to the local economy during the last year were rewarded by Aberdeen Convention Bureau on 25 November, at its annual Ambassador Awards dinner.**

The Bureau's Ambassador programme works closely with the academic and corporate communities throughout the area.

Many of those appointed as Conference Ambassadors have a high profile within specialist fields such as oil and gas, health, food research, science and environmental factors.

They work to promote Aberdeen City and Shire as a conference destination by attracting key meetings and exhibitions to the area, focusing attention on the region and encouraging local economic growth.

In return, the scheme allows ambassadors to showcase their research and raise their own profile within their specialism, giving their subject matter a wider audience through Aberdeen Convention Bureau's support and promotion.

Recipients included Dr Sundari Joseph from the Faculty of Health and Social Care, Dr Jeanette Robertson and Dr Neil Emmison from the School of Pharmacy and Life and Mrs Barbara Jones, University Events Manager.

## ABS short-listed for National Placement and Internship Awards

**Aberdeen Business School has been short-listed in the inaugural National Placement and Internship Awards, held by Rate My Placement.**

The School is one of only four UK universities short-listed, and the only university in Scotland to be considered for the accolade of best 'University with a Forward Thinking Attitude to Work Based Learning'.

The National Placement and Internship Awards are designed to recognise and reward those employers, universities and students who provide and contribute to excellence within work experience for undergraduates in the UK.

An independent judging panel will now decide which of the shortlisted parties deserves to become the overall category winner and the winners will be presented with their Awards at the event itself on 21<sup>st</sup> January at Oxford Brookes University.

## Foyer Gallery shows work by US based artist

**An exhibition of portrait paintings and landscapes by Gray's School of Art graduate and artist David Constable was launched at the Foyer Restaurant and Gallery with a private viewing on 7 December, sponsored by Shell.**

Aberdonian David Constable completed his formal education at the Southern Illinois University in America, and is an instructor with the University of Virginia's College at Wise, deep in the heart of Appalachian coal country. Since 2005 Constable has exhibited with the University of Seville, Spain and in various US cities.

David said, "These paintings are aimed at digital production technique and its subsequent alteration of the receptivity of paintings. My painting practice remains a physical engagement; the portraits are testament of my profound opposition to the production of 'virtual' value."

The artist lives in rural Virginia where the mainstay of commerce has, and continues to be the extraction and distribution of coal. The substantial influence of mining, which requires an overwhelming industrial effort, operates as the object of the landscape studies reflecting the complete subordination of the natural environment.

The exhibition is open from Tuesday to Saturday 11am – 11.00pm and runs until 23 January 2010.

## Industry - Academia Collaboration Short-listed for Energy Institute Award

**An innovative degree programme run jointly by Shell International Exploration and Production and the University, was short-listed for an award at the prestigious Energy Institute Awards 2009, in November.**

The Advanced Degree Programme for Shell Wells Technical Professionals enables Shell personnel to gain an MSc degree as part of their learning and development programme. Fifty staff have joined since the pilot stage, studying for either MSc Well Design and Engineering, or MSc Completion and Intervention Engineering, with the first cohort graduating in July 2009.

The MSc Well Design and Engineering course focuses on the planning, construction, project management and delivery of wells designed to facilitate the extraction of hydrocarbons. The MSc Completion and Intervention Engineering is focused on the design and construction of the Well Completion, and operation and management of an existing well for the purpose of restoring, maintaining or enhancing hydrocarbon production.

In keeping with the structure of Shell, the programme runs on an international scale, with students and graduates coming from four continents.

Senior Lecturer at the School of Engineering, Laurie Power, explained the underpinning philosophy of the programme, "We are already aware of the success that the programme has brought both to the students in terms of their professional development and enhanced career path, and also to Shell's Wells performance. To be recognised in this way by the industry is further recognition of our success."

## IT Leadership course launches

**The School of Computing is launching a new postgraduate course specifically designed to equip IT specialists with the tools required to fulfil key leadership roles.**

Available on a distance learning basis from this month and opening for full-time students in September, the course is aimed at those with little or no management skills. It aims to prepare students to be IT managers, ready to act in any scenario, whether they are working for a global enterprise or an SME.

For further details about the course contact 01224 262700 or [m-sc-enquiry@comp.rgu.ac.uk](mailto:m-sc-enquiry@comp.rgu.ac.uk)



## Video specialist Viscom lands key role in search-and-rescue contract bid

Aberdeen-based multimedia specialist Viscom is playing a leading role in an international consortium's bid to run the UK's helicopter search and rescue services. The University is an equal shareholder of the organisation with 34%, along with Heli One and Bristow Helicopters. Andrew McCreath is the Chairman of Viscom Board of Directors.

The company was invited to produce promotional programmes for Soteria, a consortium comprising CHC — the world's largest commercial helicopter operator — military and search and rescue specialist Thales UK, and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Viscom is the leading provider of passenger safety briefings to the North Sea and global helicopter sector — including for CHC — and the company's globally-recognised creative and technical expertise and understanding of the industry led to Soteria's choice.

The company was commissioned to create two videos: a detailed version used by the Soteria stakeholders to promote their bid at government level and to specialist media; and an abridged version for use at exhibitions, seminars, and on websites. Both feature voice-over artist Nick Rowe from Channel 5's Ice Road Truckers.

## National student survey

The University participated in the National Student Survey (NSS), a survey of all final year undergraduate students, for the first time in 2009. The outcomes of the 2009 NSS, which inform national league tables and are available to applicants via the UCAS website, highlight positive experiences in respect of the accessibility of staff and the usefulness of placements. Overall, 84% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their course. A number of areas for development were also identified via the 2009 Survey, including course organisation and management. Deans of Faculty and Heads of School are now working to improve the student experience in respect of these areas.

In order to ensure students are aware of the work being taken forward, a feedback campaign making use of "You Said, We Did" branding was launched across campus during December, highlighting specific changes made as a result of student feedback on Central Services and facilities. The University has:

- increased the size of email mailboxes and upgraded the wireless network across the campus
- introduced new GPAS print kiosks
- introduced a Strictly Silent campaign within libraries
- significantly increased book stock in the St Andrew Street Library
- refurbished St Andrew Street catering facilities
- funded the extensive refurbishment of the RGU:Union

Arrangements are currently being made for the University's participation in the 2010 NSS, which will commence on 8 February, and colleagues involved in this will receive information shortly. As was the practice last year, NSS Co-ordinators have been appointed in each School and these individuals will co-ordinate activity within their area to encourage completion of the Survey. Posters, student ambassadors and a prize draw will also be arranged to encourage completion.

Anyone who would like further information regarding the Survey should contact Christine Buchanan (c.buchanan@rgu.ac.uk).

## University Open Day included 'Xtra' special workshop for parents

The University opened its doors to prospective students in November for the second time that year. The first Open Day attracted around 2000 visitors and it was decided to open its doors for a second time to allow as many prospective students as possible to see what's on offer.

This was the first time a University Open Day has taken place on a Saturday, designed to fit in with the busy lifestyles that so many of us follow.

Each of the three Faculties hosted their own range of dynamic events throughout the day including the School of Computing who invited parents into an 'X Factor' style video booth to make their own podcasts. The School was also delighted to welcome Bruce Napier from the British Geological Survey along for the day to present a 3D demonstration of their data visualisation environment. Giovisionary software that uses gaming technology such as graphics cards, combined with real satellite images, enabled Bruce to take participants on a virtual field trip to Mars.

Ellon Academy pupil Matthew Emmison went to see Mars with his dad Neil, who is a lecturer with the University's School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences.



Matthew (front) at the demonstration.

## Student designs stand out for charity

**A group of students studying Fashion Design saw their work featured as part of a very special fashion show in Aberdeen in November, to raise money for Sue Ryder Care.**

The event took place at Pittodrie Football Stadium and the students were asked to design eye-catching garments for the show, using cut-offs from the charity's high street store chain.

Nadiah Mohad Taib transformed an old wedding gown for her part in the 'Sublime and Shiny' project. She went for the ice maiden look and found an innovative way of pulling the material together to make a half moon silhouette shape.

Kayleigh Archibald also had her work featured at the event. She said, "I just got stuck in, chose fabrics and started manipulating them on the stand to see how they could work together. I really like the idea of using fabrics that nobody would have looked at and making them something someone might wear now."

Lawrence Ho created the most unusual piece for the student project and used a craft technique to pin circular shapes made from recycled cardboard boxes to a skirt he made out of old plastic tubes.

The money raised from the fashion show event will support Sue Ryder Care's local care centre at Dee View Court in Kincorth, Aberdeen.

## Gray's graduates win a BAFTA

**Three graduates from Gray's School of Art have won a BAFTA for their work in Cybraphon.**

FOUND is an artist collective / experimental pop band based in Edinburgh made up of Ziggy Campbell, Tommy Perman and Kev Sim.

Cybraphon was built by FOUND. It features a collection of self-playing vintage instruments including a reed organ and an Indian accordion housed within a Victorian wardrobe. Behind its antique appearance is a cutting edge computer brain, whose personality is modelled on an image-conscious rock band.

Cybraphon has accounts on Facebook and Twitter and every 15 seconds checks whether it has received any pokes or tweets, as well as Googling itself and monitoring reviews and comments.

If Cybraphon feels popular, it will play an upbeat tune and post happy Twitter messages to its fans. When publicity dies down, however, it will sink into depression and grumble online about the lack of attention.

The software which drives the robot's brain was designed at the University of Edinburgh.

BAFTA Scotland awards recognise achievement in film, television and interactive arts.

## Univation and Proclad fly the University flag in Bahrain

**The University's profile was prominent at the recent Getenergy event held in Bahrain on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November.**

Univation's representative Proclad Academy, based in Dubai, UAE, took a stand at the two-day event, showcasing Univation and the University's capabilities.

The purpose of Getenergy events is to link international education and training providers with government and oil and gas industry training professionals on a region by region basis.

Stuart Rennie, Univation Sales Manager, led a very successful discussion forum on the first day on International Good Practice and Innovation in Education and Training, attended by training managers from a number of key oil and gas companies in the region including Saudi Aramco.

In his speech at the opening ceremony Lord Digby Jones, UK Business Ambassador, welcomed the presence of the University, giving invaluable visibility to the University name.



Pictured at the Proclad stand are (left to right): HE Jamie Bowden, British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Lord Digby Jones, UK Business Ambassador, the oil Minister – HE Dr Abdul-Hussain Ali Mirza, Minister of Oil & Gas Affairs, Bahrain, Stuart Rennie, Sales Manager and Andy Macdonald, Business Development Manager, from Univation and Mark Cullens, Principal of the Proclad Academy.

## EVENTS DIARY 2009

For further information on all events, visit:  
[www.rgu.ac.uk/news/eventsdiary](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/news/eventsdiary)

### JANUARY

10	International Students Welcome lunch
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### APRIL

21	Non-Medical Prescribing Conference
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28	Richard Noble talk
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### MAY

20	IPE Conference
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### JULY

13-16	Summer Graduation ceremonies
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