

February 2010

Nexus

Connecting the University community



**ROBERT GORDON
UNIVERSITY • ABERDEEN**

RGU: UNION wins award

MSc Project Management first in UK to
achieve PMI accreditation

Principal on this year's Honours list



Sustainable and affordable – Dunoon development is first in Scotland

Professor Gokay Deveci, from the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, has applied his world-renowned expertise in sustainable housing to design the first certified Passivhaus in Scotland, demonstrating that cutting-edge design and affordability are not mutually exclusive.

Professor Deveci has designed 'Bethania' – an affordable housing scheme comprising 10 semi-detached houses on the island of Dunoon. The scheme is the first in Scotland to be officially accredited by the Passivhaus Institut in Germany. This voluntary construction standard is only awarded to buildings meeting rigorous energy efficiency criteria. A passivhaus house is an energy-efficient building that has year-round comfort and a good indoor climate, without

the use of active space heating or cooling systems. The heating requirement is reduced by means of passive measures to the point that there is no longer any need for a conventional heating system.

Professor Deveci, who is also a senior member of the University's Institute for Innovation, Design and Sustainability (IDEAS), said, "Over 40% of the UK's CO₂ emissions come from houses, yet by 2016, the Government has decreed that all new houses must be zero-carbon. Consequently it is of the utmost importance that we apply our knowledge of building design, and the technology that is currently available, to producing houses with a minimal carbon footprint.

"I am absolutely delighted that the Bethania houses are the first in Scotland to be awarded Passivhaus status, as it proves that sustainable, energy efficient design is possible on a restricted budget. Affordability has not been achieved at the expense of architectural design or construction quality, and the design solutions we arrived at meet the requirements of best practice in environmental sustainability.

"The success of this project is down to excellent team-work, and I am very grateful to the Scottish Passivhaus Centre (SPHC), which played a key role in providing energy efficiency consultancy, and supplying vital Passivhaus components."

Gary Smollet worked with Gokay on the project.

University and Aberdeen College secure six-figure grant for skills project

The University and Aberdeen College have secured £255,000 in a competitive process led by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to achieve higher workplace productivity through businesses and organisations utilising fully the skills of their employees. It also aims to identify employees' potential to develop new skills to increase the effectiveness of the business.

The project, which is project managed by Alison Watson, will focus on the oil and gas sector. It will begin with a research phase, led by David Gibbons-Wood, Director of ABS's Centre for International Labour Market

Studies, to fully understand the lack of correlation between increased levels of skills and increased productivity. The research process will include structured interviews and focus group meetings with industry.

The research outcome will be used to set up a number of pilot projects involving local companies which will be formally monitored and evaluated. It is hoped that this stage will begin in summer 2010.

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THIS ISSUE

Welcome to February's issue of the University's magazine, Nexus. This issue sees a double-page spread focusing on the University's activities with business and the wider community, as well as developments and events. 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. 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 March issue is Wednesday 10 February.

Gail Caie
Senior Communications Officer

SPECIAL FEATURES

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RGU PEOPLE

RGU PEOPLE



Neil Bruce

Business leader to become ABS Professor

One of the north-east's most influential businessmen is to tutor the corporate leaders of the future when he becomes an Honorary Professor at Aberdeen Business School.

Neil Bruce is Chief Operating Officer of Natural Resources and Power and Process at AMEC, an international engineering and project management company. The company has revenues of more than £2.6 billion and employs almost 22,000 people in around 40 countries worldwide.

Neil has more than 25 years experience in the oil and gas industry and has been with AMEC since 1997, becoming COO of the organisation's Natural Resources business in 2006 and COO of its Power and Process business in December 2009. He is also an Executive Director of AMEC plc.

Neil is a member of the International Oil and Gas Business Advisory Board and a Fellow of the Institute of Directors, where he recently won an award for developing young people.

He will deliver lectures to students on leadership and management from January.

Neil said, "I am proud to have been given this Honorary Professorship, which I see as a symbol both of the excellent long-term relationship AMEC has with the University, and of my long-held belief in developing people. The development opportunities I have been given have been fundamental to my career. I now hope to help others in the same way."

Pharmacy and Life Sciences Professor appointed to European Space Agency

Professor Brian Ratcliffe from the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, has been appointed as an expert reviewer for the European Space Agency (Human Space Flight Directorate) to assess proposals for the panel Crew Health Care. He will be assessing applications for studies of diet, exercise and health of the space crew. He contributed to the panel's meeting at the European Science Foundation headquarters in Strasbourg on 7 December.

Project Management course is first in UK to achieve global accreditation

The Aberdeen Business School is leading the way in project management education, as the very first UK institution to achieve accreditation from the Project Management Institute's (PMI) Global Accreditation Center.

The MSc Project Management programme is already highly regarded by employers, assessment bodies and academics alike, and this latest accolade from one of the world's leading project management organisations will set it apart from similar courses elsewhere in the UK.

Based in Canada, PMI shares knowledge with nearly 500,000 members in more than 185 countries. Programmes that achieve its accreditation standards have to meet rigorous criteria, and this process includes: an assessment of programme objectives, faculty and student evaluations, on site and online inspections, annual self-evaluation and proof of continuous improvements.

The course is designed to meet the needs of a range of areas in all sectors, from engineering to business, and even health. It is currently delivered in Algeria (on behalf of Sonatrach) as well as Aberdeen, in both full-time and distance learning modes.

Programme Leader, Senga Briggs, will be joined by Professor Marcella, Dean of Aberdeen Business School, when the project management team are formally presented with the accreditation by the PMI in Milan in September 2010.

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The project is being overseen by a Steering Group which includes Professors Rita Marcella, Val Maehle and John Watson and Charlie Deane and David Brooks from Aberdeen College.

Industry partners are involved in the External Advisory Group. They include: Sector Skills Councils COGENT and Semta; OPITO - the Oil and Gas Academy; the Offshore Contractors' Association; and Scottish Enterprise Aberdeen City and Shire. The Group is Chaired by Skills Development Scotland.

Vice-Principal and Pro-Vice Chancellor Shona Cormack said, "The University and the College are delighted to have been awarded this funding which will enable us to contribute even more strongly to the success of the regional economy.

"The established networks and acknowledged expertise of the External Advisory Group will help to ensure that the outcomes of the project will add value to businesses in the sector and the project team is grateful for their support."

The project is part of a wider programme of 12 projects across Scotland funded by the SFC.



Liz Cowie, Principal Advisor to the New Zealand Department of Labour; Linda McLeod, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education; Robert Bellfield, Associate Principal of Aberdeen College; Professor Rita Marcella, Dean of Aberdeen Business School; Alison Watson, Project Manager, Maximising the Impact of Skills and Shona Cormack, Vice-Principal of Student Experience and External Relations.



(From left) RGU Union General Manager Michelle Collie and Vice President of Union & Societies, Rachel Watson

RGU: Union achieves Gold

RGU: Union, the University's Student Association, has achieved Gold in the Aberdeen Best Bar None Awards 2009.

The University achieved Gold in the 'Specialist Entertainment Category', in the first year it entered, following a recent assessment visit to the city centre facility. The Award was received by Union General Manager Michelle Collie, at a ceremony in the city's Town House on Tuesday 1 December.

The assessment took into account the Union's policies on security, underage drinking, fire procedures, first aid, staff training and drugs and substance abuse.

Michelle Collie, said, "The Union is absolutely delighted to receive the Award which recognises the work undertaken by our staff to ensure a safer environment for our students and guests. We strive to make sure students enjoy themselves as much as possible in the Union whilst feeling safe and secure. This award is a benchmark for the Union, highlighting our commitment to best practice."

Over the coming year, the Union will be put forward for a number of new accreditations and awards, including the Students' Union Evaluation Initiative, Sound* Environmental Impact Awards and Investors in Volunteering.

MBE for Principal

Professor Mike Pittilo, Principal of the University, has been made an MBE in the New Year Honours list for services to healthcare.

Although Professor Pittilo's main career has been within higher education, he has dedicated much of his time to raising standards in healthcare education and supporting implementation of statutory regulation.

Professor Pittilo has held a number of national roles, including chairing Department of Health working groups established by Ministers, a Trustee for the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health, membership of the NHS Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Strategic Health Authority and Education Advisor to the NHS SW Regional Education Development Group. He has also had a lead role in establishing a Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences, a School of Physiotherapy, Departments of Pharmacy, Biomedical Science and a Postgraduate Medical School.

UNIVERSITY'S BRIGHT SPARKS CONTINUE TO SHINE



Back row (from left): Dr Lorna McHattie, lecturer, Katie Smart, Macmillan Fundraising Manager, Dr Helen Vosper, lecturer and Rebecca Kilfeather, student and committee member. Front: Niamh Morrison, Committee President, and Lindsey Reid, student and committee member.

Annual Pharmacy panto raises charity cash

Staff and students from the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences raised over £600 for charity at their annual pantomime held at the University's Schoolhill campus on Friday 4 December.

The pantomime is a 30-year old tradition, run by Pharmacy students, which allows staff and students alike to poke light-hearted fun at each other in the name of charity. As in previous years, the evening was split into two separate performances, with the students taking the first slot, followed by the staff pantomime in the second half. Both performances featured originally written scripts.

In total, 22 students and 12 staff members performed in front of a packed audience of colleagues and friends at the MacRobert Hall, Schoolhill. A combination of ticket sales and a raffle raised a total of £611.35 which has now been donated to Macmillan Cancer Support.

The night concluded with a free entry party at Liquid Nightclub, which supported the evening.

"We're delighted to be donating the funds raised at this fantastic evening to Macmillan" said Pharmacy Committee President Niamh Morrison. "We really didn't have much time to put it all together as we were juggling script writing and costume-making with course work and preparation for exams, but it all turned out alright on the night."

Katie Smart, Fundraising Manager for Macmillan said, "Macmillan tries to improve the lives of people living with cancer. The money raised will be distributed locally, going towards funding our services such as hiring nurses and providing information on cancer."

The student's Pharmacy Committee runs a number of events throughout the academic year to provide entertainment and a sense of community amongst students. Other fundraising events this year include a wine and cheese evening and a football competition.

Outstanding students benefit from industry backing

Three recent graduates of the MSc Project Management programme at Aberdeen Business School, who have excelled in their area of study, are to benefit from a share of £5,000 in the form of the annual Balmoral Offshore Engineering Prize.

This is the second year running that the Aberdeen-based subsea equipment manufacturing company has sponsored the prize for students, viewing it as an important link between industry and academia, as well as providing a real boost to students on the course. Each student had to submit a research proposal to enter the competition and these have been rated so highly by assessors that plans are now in place to take the best forward to the next stage of research.

James Milne, Chairman and Managing Director of Balmoral Group, said, "It is remarkable what a fresh pair of eyes can bring to a project and our collaboration with the students and staff of Aberdeen Business School, both in terms of this competition and the placement opportunities we offer students, is truly a win-win situation."

Sara Kavanagh has been awarded first prize in the competition and a cheque for £2,500 that will help to support her as she looks for a job in London. Her project management proposal centred around measuring the extent of application of project governance and its relationship to project success in the oil and gas service sector.

Babatunde Odunlami and Christiana Fowode have achieved second and third place in the competition and were awarded cheques for £1,500 and £1,000 respectively.

Senga Briggs, Programme Leader for Project Management at Aberdeen Business School, said, "These students each boast an 80% + pass rate for their dissertations and this is testament to the high standard of their work. They have looked at real issues within real organisations and have come up with innovative ideas that could help push business forward. It is brilliant to see students benefitting from industry-academic collaborations such as this."



(from left): Professor Robert Newton, Associate Head of Aberdeen Business School; James Milne, Chairman and Managing Director of Balmoral Group; Babatunde Odunlami who achieved second place; Senga Briggs, Programme Leader for Project Management at Aberdeen Business School; winner Sara Kavanagh and Christiana Fowode who achieved third place.



Hannah Miley

Students enjoy success in drawing prize

Students from Gray's School of Art have achieved success in an annual drawing prize.

The David Gordon Memorial Trust Student Drawing Prize is open to second, third and final year painting and printmaking students, aiming to promote and stimulate drawing as a core skill in the creative process within art and design education.

Winner, Craig Harper has been awarded £350 and runner-up Lindsay Stewart received £150. Craig is currently in his third year of a degree in painting and won the prize after submitting two of his personal sketchbooks.

Craig said, "I always keep sketchbooks, it's just a part of what I enjoy doing. I fill them up from cover to cover with drawings and thoughts, and everything I end up painting can usually be traced back to these sketches. The two I submitted were completed during the last eight months and it came as a real surprise to hear that I had won first prize for them. I am really pleased."

This is the second year that Lindsay has been recognised by judges of the Prize, and as the culmination of her University journey draws closer with Gray's Degree Show in June 2010, Lindsay is delighted with her achievement. Her submission, 'Offerings', are drawings based on the small dead creatures caught by her cats.

Well known local artist Eric Auld was among the judging panel which also included Ian Parkinson, Chair of the David Gordon Memorial Trust, Edi Swan and David Henderson, Programme Leader for Painting and Printmaking at Gray's.

There were over 80 submissions with 45 selected to exhibit and presented to the panel to judge.



(from left) Ian Parkinson, Craig Harper, Eric Auld and Edi Swan.

Record breaking swimmer Hannah sweeps the board

Sports and Exercise Science student Hannah Miley was inspirational at the 13th LEN European Short Course Swimming Championships in Istanbul in December. She stole the show, collecting the British team's only medals and setting two new British records in the process.

Hannah excelled from day one at the Championships. She started with a bronze medal in the 200m Individual Medley (IM) then set a new British record in the 200m Breaststroke. But she saved the best till last, winning gold in the 400m IM, again with a British best time just 0.6 seconds outside the European record.

"I knew it would be a tough race," said Hannah of her first place finish. "I did not start too fast in order to keep some power for the end of the race. I didn't worry about the other swimmers, and I'm very happy

because it's my first individual gold medal." Hannah also scooped 10 titles at the Scottish Gas National Championships in Glasgow in January. She was recognised in the Aberdeen 200 Trophies for the best single performances in the 800m freestyle.

Hannah also received the Paisley 500 trophy for the best overall performance of the Championships, and won the 200m, 400m and 800m freestyle, 100m and 200m breaststroke, 200m and 400m IM, 100 and 200m butterfly and the 200m backstroke, where she set a new Scottish record.

STUDENTS CELEBRATE PÖYRY SCHOLARSHIP SUCCESS

An Aberdeen Business School student is celebrating after securing a share of a £140,000 scholarship.

Russell Hogg is one of five candidates to be chosen to receive a scholarship from Pöyry, the global engineering consultancy. Russell is in the third year of a Management with Economics degree.

Pöyry, which employs more than 60 people in Aberdeen, launched its inaugural scheme last year and has been working with university chiefs to select students to receive financial support.

The programme is one of the most far reaching of its kind seen in Scotland and involves Robert Gordon University, The

University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, The University of Strathclyde, the University of Aberdeen and Banff and Buchan College. More than 35 third year undergraduates and final year HND students will receive support of between £500 and £6,000 during their studies, until the last scholarship students graduate in 2016.

Russell said, "The scholarship from Pöyry is a fantastic opportunity for me to gain experience of working within a successful and dynamic organisation. The award will be of great help during the remainder of my studies. Access to support and mentoring from industry professionals within the company will be invaluable as I prepare for a career within the energy industry."



Call for companies to benefit from project management expertise

Aberdeen Business School is looking to attract the support of companies who are interested in facilitating research into project management.

Every year, students on the MSc Project Management programme produce a research proposal as part of their dissertation, highlighting real issues within a real business context. These proposals, considered to be of exceptional quality by assessors, are focused on desk research and will remain at proposal stage without the support of companies to facilitate field research.

This year, students undertook research on areas including governance, risk management, leadership and the project management office, and produced work synthesising most of the research already undertaken in these areas. Grades were all in the 80%+ range. Companies are now required to support the application of these proposals by facilitating case studies or other applied research and, where appropriate, providing some contribution to funding.

Senga Briggs, Programme Leader for the course, explained, "Academic research informs the practice of project management and the real-world application of its results sparks further research. This is an opportunity for companies to gain feedback on their project management practice in specific areas and for students to gain first hand experience of the realities of project management."

Any company interested in helping take these proposals forward should contact Senga Briggs on 01224 263832 or via s.briggs@rgu.ac.uk.

Shadow curator Skypes for Santa

Iain Irving, MA Course leader at Gray's School of Art, and three of his students, were working with Deveron Arts, Huntly, on a community art project with Gemuce Pompílio Hilário, an artist from Maputo, Mozambique.

As part of the Deveron Arts programme a Shadow Curator is to be involved in each project. The Shadow Curator role is a new concept being explored by Deveron Arts. Iain 'met' with Claudia Zeiske, Director of Deveron Arts, weekly via Skype to discuss and debate the evolution of the project and its value for those involved, such as the local community and participating artists.

The students involved were those keen to develop their curating skills. They were Matthew Wickham, Rebecca Patterson and Asmita Sarkar.

Gemuce's project 'Money Crunch' took place over three months, finishing in December. It explored personal debt in a local context while making analogies to the national debt crisis in Africa.

Gemuce played on the ironies of Christmas and our notions of being good, while spending money and getting into debt, and appeared as a Santa coming from Africa. He began with a stall at Huntly's Halloween Hairst continental market underlining the absurdity of the increasingly early promotion of Christmas in the UK and also appeared at public places that deal with money and giving.

The project culminated on 10 December with Gemuce's final presentation at the Festive Market in Huntly. Iain and the students had a stall called the 'Museum of Monetary Ambiguity', aimed as a respite from consumerism. It displayed curated objects which are to share and experience, and have other values other than monetary.



(left to right) Asmita Sarkar, Rebecca Patterson and Matthew Wickham at the stall.



Scott Sutherland School Professor chairs annual conference

Professor Richard Laing from the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment / IDEAS recently chaired part of the 'Build with Care' annual conference in Bremen. The conference focused on the relationship between climate change and housing, and included presentations from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Energy Research Centre in the Netherlands. Professor Laing's involvement stemmed from his participation in a previous meeting hosted by project partner Aberdeen City Council, and has also included the compilation of a 'Baseline Study' document.

'Build with Care' is partly funded by the Interreg IVB programme, and includes 18 partners from five countries. The University will host a further event during 2010, to discuss policy and strategy emerging from the study.

Further details of the project can be found via www.buildwithcare.net/

IT leaders come together in Aberdeen

The School of Computing, in association with ScotlandIS, the trade body for the information and communications technologies industry, has formed an IT Leaders' Forum for the North-east of Scotland. The first event organised by the IT Leaders' Forum took place at the University on 14 January.

Co-sponsored by HEAD, the IT resourcing group, and law firm McGrigors, the aim of the Forum is to grow and support a network of IT managers. The Forum will allow members to share ideas and deal with issues together, as well as receiving expert input in the field at tailored networking events.

David Mitchell, Senior Vice President of IT Research for leading market analysts, Ovum, delivered a presentation at the launch event, the Forum's inaugural Technology Forecast. David has previously presented this event in Edinburgh, but through co-sponsorship ScotlandIS has also been able to bring this annual event to Aberdeen.

Professor Ian Allison, Head of the School of Computing who has played a key role in setting up the Forum, said, "This is a really positive step forward for the IT specialists in the North-east, and the University is delighted to be part of it. Initiatives such as the Forum fill a growing shortage of technical leadership skills across all sectors and will reinforce this objective."

Leaders across the region are invited to participate in this group. For more information visit www.scotlandis.com/events/event-details/techforecast2010aberdeen or karen.meechan@scotlandis.com or call 01506 472200.



Local forum to discuss solutions for a greener construction industry

Aberdeen's Construction Industry Development Forum (CIDF) launched their 2010 programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events entitled 'Towards a greener construction industry', at the University on 25 January.

The event was organised by the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, in association with Aberdeen City Council and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), and counts towards two hours of CPD.

Professor Gokay Deveci, from the Scott Sutherland School and Institute for Innovation, Design and Sustainability (IDEAS), delivered a presentation on the evening describing his ongoing research involving the experimentation of low carbon houses in Aberdeenshire.

"Housing is by far the biggest perpetrator of carbon emissions in the country – over 40% in fact," states Professor Deveci. "With the Scottish

government aiming to cut carbon emissions by 40% before 2016, it is clear that progressing quickly towards a zero-carbon level for new housing will be critical to realising this aim."

Other speakers included Dr David Moore, a Reader and Course Leader of the MSc Construction Project Management, who talked about the 'Construction Improvement Club' – a project which the School has been recently involved with, and Bruce Taylor, a Lecturer in Environmental Design, who discussed steps towards low and zero carbon in non-domestic buildings. Finally, Amy Smith, Sustainable Development Officer at Aberdeen City Council, presented the 'Build with CaRe (Carbon Reduction)' project which is a pan-European project.

Dr Mohamed Abdel-Wahab, a Lecturer in Construction Management and a member of the Institute for Management, Governance and Society (IMaGeS), welcomed delegates to the event, alongside Heather Farquhar, Skills and Business Training Manager at Aberdeen City Council.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

- THE UNIVERSITY WORKING WITH BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY



Patricia Anderson and David McKay take charge of the new IT Management course.

IT is the driving force as opportunity knocks

The MSc IT Management, a new postgraduate course specially designed to equip IT specialists with the toolset required to fulfil key leadership roles, was launched by the School of Computing in January.

With more than 50 years of industry experience between them, David McKay, formerly Director of IT with Bristow, and Patricia Anderson, previously of Shell IT International working within the Shell Group Strategy, Planning, Portfolio and Architecture team, have been working together to develop what promises to be a course focused on the hands-on, practical application of IT leadership.

The MSc is intended to help fill the shortfall of skilled IT managers. The need for professionals in this area is already outstripping demand and market analysis has shown that this trend will continue in the UK for at least another five years. Currently, there are very few courses available that offer the blend of industry-relevant material that these managers need.

David said, "If you look at courses currently available to IT specialists, they are all quite technical and, whilst these are brilliant at preparing graduates for technical roles within industry, the leadership aspect is missing. As these individuals progress in their careers, it becomes important to gain effective leadership training to back up technical expertise. We are preparing the Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and IT Senior Managers of the future to do the best job possible."

Patricia said, "Once you get into the more strategic roles, it's not just about deciding what the IT department should be doing but more about the whole business. The thing that occurred to me was that there's a fairly easy transition in managing bigger and bigger teams but when taking a role in planning, you're no longer focusing just on technology. Leadership skills are a lot more difficult to 'pick up'."

The MSc was available on a distance learning basis from January and will open for full-time students in September.

For further details about the new course contact 01224 262700, or msc-enquiry@comp.rgu.ac.uk. Alternatively, visit: www.rgu.ac.uk/ITManagement

Obesity research to be showcased at national exhibition

An exhibit entitled "Fat Body Slim: Shape Matters!" by Dr Giovanna Bermanno and fellow members of the Institute for Health and Welfare Research and the Centre for Obesity Research and Epidemiology (CORE), has been selected to exhibit at the Royal Society's 350th Anniversary Summer Science Exhibition in London.

The exhibit has been designed to showcase the University's cutting-edge obesity research in a highly engaging and interactive fashion. Members of the public will be able to explore the research by taking part in various body size and composition measurements using methods such as bioelectrical impedance and air-displacement analysis, otherwise known as the BodPod. Individuals will have the option of modifying images taken of them and virtually modifying their shape using interactive software. They will also be able to stain fat cells and see what they look like under a microscope.

In addition, scientific evidence of the effects of varying dietary therapies on weight management, body composition and biochemical parameters of cardiovascular risk will be presented, as well as evidence of how insulin resistance and molecules produced by adipose tissue could affect breast cancer development.

The exhibition will take place from 26 June – 4 July 2010 at the Southbank Centre in London. Around 30,000 members of the public and 4,000 school pupils are expected to attend. Dr Bermanno's exhibit will be one of only 26, and was selected from over 120 applications.



Tackling Timetabling

Tackling timetabling and improving course organisation has the potential to enhance the University's student experience according to results from the recent National Student Survey.

While much of the response to this will need to be taken at School level, the central timetabling team will contribute through implementation of a timetabling project, initiated last year to tackle the issues of key concern to students. Led by Timetabling Manager, Stuart McPherson, the project has focused on University policies, processes and software with a view to delivering improved timetable accuracy, format and timeliness of publication, more consistent teaching patterns and improved room utilisation.

With support from across the University the project continues to make good progress. To date, there is a new more prominent and comprehensive timetabling website (www.rgu.ac.uk/timetabling) which gives students information on accessing their timetable and understanding it. It also gives students several means of communicating with

timetabling staff whether by e-mail, telephone or through the new forum on CampusMoodle. Secondly, in addition to being more readily accessible, the published timetable has been reformatted and simplified, stripping out unnecessary information so that it is more easily understood. On top of this, most Schools now rely solely on the centrally published timetables, having discontinued School-specific publications: this represents a useful reduction in admin and also lessens the chance of students referring to outdated information. As we make further developments all Schools are expected to follow suit.

More generally, adherence to the new timetabling policies should reduce the number of timetable changes students experience, and room utilisation should also be improved. Staff across the University are asked to familiarise themselves with these policies to ensure they deliver the desired outcomes (www.rgu.ac.uk/timetabling/policies). Both of these issues are being monitored so that further improvements can be targeted where there is the greatest need.

Over the coming months the project will continue to focus on process improvements, technological developments and better communication mechanisms. For example, work is underway with our IT Services department to provide direct links to individual course timetables through the Student Portal. In concert with this, we intend to expand the use of the University's existing text messaging system to ensure students are informed about timetable changes at the earliest opportunity; support from School admin staff and academics will be key in delivering this. These developments, coupled with efforts to reduce the volume of timetable changes, aim to positively impact the issues most frequently reported and of greatest concern to students.

If you have any questions, suggestions or feedback on timetabling matters please contact the Timetabling Manager or a member of the Timetabling team - timetabling@rgu.ac.uk.

Stuart McPherson
Timetabling Manager

University Archive



The University Archive, Schoolhill is reaching increased visibility in the local and international community thanks to the dedicated work of the Records Management Department.

The Archive, which complements the paintings, artefacts and photographs held by the Art and Heritage Collections, comprises two key collections of records. The first contains a small collection of the

University's business records, including Definitive Course Documents (DCDs), course structure information and minutes of Academic Council and the Board of Governors.

The second collection comprises the University's historical archive which dates back to 1864. Such records were showcased in August last year when Anna Buchan, Records Management Officer,

put together a special display for Tartan Day weekend as part of the wider 2009 Homecoming celebrations.

Highlights of the display included the Coat of Arms of Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology (RGIT) and The Robert Gordon University (RGU) (as the University used to be known); papers relating to the proposed plan to build a School of Navigation in 1914 and examples of the Nautical training during the 1960s and 1970s. The display also included registers of attendance dating from World War One and the war damage of the School of Domestic Science, King Street, which resulted from German bombing in 1940.

"We were delighted to put together the display" says Records Manager, Keith Fraser. "It was a great showcase for the valuable and fascinating information the University's archives contain, and has sparked many people's interest in their own search for information."

Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the public has a general right of access to the records held within the University Archive. However, access to personal information is subject to the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Please contact Anna at anna.buchan@rgu.ac.uk or on x2788 for further information on how to access the Archive. Alternatively, please visit the Archive's web page at: <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/rm/general/page.cfm?page=53147>.



◀ (left to right) Josephine O. Omuya, Chidiebere Dike, Oyoje Bello, Kareem Adisa, Nanna Chumle, Revelation Yoloje, Fatima Ibrahim, all International Information Technology Law at the UN.

ABS Law students visit the UN

To enhance the student experience at Aberdeen Business School's Department of Law, 20 of its postgraduate students had the unique opportunity to visit the United Nations Agencies in Geneva, Switzerland, on a four-day study trip.

The students came from various law postgraduate programmes including International Information Technology Law, International Commercial Law and International Trade among others.

The students attended a series of workshops and seminars as part of their visit. They were received by Marrinne Lathuille from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), who gave a briefing on the organisation. The seminar was led by Jaroslaw Ponder, an expert in Telecommunications Law, also from ITU, and focused on the organisation's response to contemporary challenges in IT and the telecommunications world.

They also met with the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the latter, many controversial issues were raised and discussed by the students and the presenter, Catherine Phuong. Students who were carrying out research work on human rights discourse made use of the opportunity to discuss conflicting opinions about tensions and power play between countries on human rights matters.

International Information Technology Law student Kareem Adisa said, "The trip opened my eyes to the relevance of my programme in the outside world and has prepared me for an international career. The trip's relevance as part of graduate studies cannot be overemphasized."

Law lecturer, Mr Bukola Faturoti, who led the trip concluded, "The team of students actively engaged in intellectual discourse affecting the world politics, impressing the expert delegates from these organisations."

New project opens up historic collections to worldwide audience

A project to open up Scotland's important museum collections to a worldwide audience through the internet has been launched.

Scottish universities hold a high percentage of Scotland's nationally important collections – more than 1.8 million items in total – but only 7.5 per cent of this can be viewed on the web.

Now nine universities including Robert Gordon University, led by the University of Aberdeen, will come together to open up the nation's scientific and cultural heritage to a wider audience.

Revealing the Hidden Collections will run until June 2010 and will see important collections and artefacts electronically recorded, photographed and the details uploaded to the Culture Grid, a national cultural database run by the Collections Trust, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, and the European Commission.

The partners in the project also include the universities of Dundee, St Andrews, Stirling, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt and the Glasgow School of Art. They are all members of the University Museums in Scotland group, which received £240,000 towards the £318,000 project from the Scottish Funding Council.

Collections in five of the universities, including the entire holdings of the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow and select collections

from the Glasgow School of Art, University of St Andrews, and University of Edinburgh have been recognised as nationally important by Museums Galleries Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Curator of the University's Art and Heritage Collections, Jane Kidd, said: "We have catalogued our University's holdings of work by Gray's School of Art graduates, which includes pieces by well-known artists such as Callum Innes, Alexander Fraser, Will Maclean and Joyce Cairns. We have also discovered some fascinating high-quality electrical equipment from RGIT, as the University was formerly known, the School of Engineering, as well as a large collection of intriguing culinary items from the RGIT School of Domestic Science days. As a whole, our collection embodies a history of how these subjects were taught, and, as such, is invaluable.

"Like many other universities, we have been developing our own useful database of artefacts which is searchable online, but it can be difficult for search engines to find the items and this is where the Revealing the Hidden Collections project comes in."

(from left): Fraser Hutcheson, UCAN Fundraising Manager Kate Synnott and Daryl Neill.



Calendar girls and boys get their kit off for charity

Sports club members and staff from the University have published a naked charity calendar to raise funds for local urological cancer charity, UCAN.

The calendar features a series of light-hearted yet tastefully arranged photographs, and was the brainchild of the University's Student Association and RGU:SPORT facility. Vice President for Sports, David Hegarty, and RGU Union Health Officer, Catherine Hilton, moved the idea forward in the summer to be in time for the Christmas shopping season.

The pair took it upon themselves to recruit over ninety willing male and female subjects for the fundraising effort. The final element fell into place when RGU:SPORT staff member and professional photographer, John Prince, offered to come on board as the creative force behind the calendar.

Late in the summer, members from nine sports teams joined a contingency of RGU:SPORT staff members in shedding their clothes in a series of photo shoots. Sports clubs involved in the shoots included the University's Water polo, Trampolining, Cheerleading, Swim, Triathlon, Horse Riding, Rowing, Men's Football and Men's Rugby teams. The photo shoots were carried out in closed and secured settings to protect the public and also to calm the nerves of participants.

Sponsorship for the calendar has been provided by the University's Student Services department and the School of Health Sciences. Funds have been put towards the printing and binding of 500 calendars, which are being provided at a vastly reduced rate by the University's print and design facility, The Gatehouse. As an incentive to buyers, Aberdeen-based sports massage therapist, Joseph Devlin, has donated two hundred pounds worth of free sports massage vouchers to the University sports club that buys the most calendars.

The calendar costs £5 and is available from RGU:SPORT and the RGU:Union shop and bar.

Student nurses nominate their mentors for special award

The School of Nursing and Midwifery celebrated the hard work of its student mentors with the presentation of the annual 'Mentor of the Year Award' at the School on 9 December.

Julie McKenzie, Senior Staff Nurse at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin, received the 'Mentor of the Year Award' in recognition of the care she has taken in looking after student nurses while they are on placement. She was nominated by Amanda Bremner who was mentored by Julie last year.

Amanda said, "I was impressed by Julie's professionalism, her gentle nature and her ability to support me, even under pressure. She was an excellent role model and an inspiration to me for the future."

This is the third year running that mentors have been recognised in this way, but the first time that newly appointed Head of Nursing and Midwifery, Professor Brian Webster presented the Award. He was joined by Mrs Elinor Smith, Director of Nursing Services NHS Grampian, and Alison McLennan, Senior Lecturer in Practice Education at the School.

Alison explains, "We are delighted to congratulate Julie on her outstanding contribution to the support and education of student nurses, and would like to extend this thanks to all those who were nominated by students this year. Each has created an effective learning environment for our students where practice is excelled, and we are extremely grateful."



(from left to right): Elinor Smith, Director of Nursing Services, NHS Grampian; Alison McLennan, Senior Lecturer in Practice Education at the University; Julie McKenzie, Mentor of the Year; Amanda Bremner, the student nurse who nominated Julie; Lorraine Young, Julie's Ward Manager; and Professor Brian Webster, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

The University hosts 'Merry Multimedia' event for pupils

The School of Computing invited secondary school pupils from across the region to join them for a lecture entitled 'Merry Multimedia' on 11 December.

The School hosts the Lecture for secondary school pupils every year. This time round, whilst demonstrating the creative use of computer software to generate impressive multimedia videos, the focus was on merriment. Pupils were invited to participate fully in the creation of a video which was produced during the lecture and viewed at the end of the event. Facilities were made available for them to download to their mobile phones for their friends to see.

David Davidson, Associate Head of the School of Computing, said: "The emphasis was on fun, with some audience participation. The event aimed to inspire interest and give some serious insight into the capability of modern computing systems and their ability to generate special effects."



International ABS

During mid November Aberdeen Business School welcomed and opened its doors to visiting international academics, scholars and researchers during the school's International Week. Beginning on Monday 9 November, the week consisted of over 40 visitors participating in a range of events from delivering guest lectures to soaking up a part of our local culture with a trip to Glen Garioch whisky distillery and Castle Fraser to celebrate a good dram and get absorbed in a tale or two!

The week was launched with the signing of the Atlantis Agreement between the University, Oklahoma State University, USA and Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland. This partnership allows students studying International Hospitality Management to truly internationalise their degree with the opportunity of studying in Finland and the USA. Students from these universities will also have the opportunity to undertake a placement in Aberdeen.

ROC Midden Nederland in the Netherlands also signed an articulation agreement with the University, strengthening our already well established Dutch links. The ABS undergraduate international opportunities publication, New Horizons, was also launched, providing an overview of 28 partner institutions across 12 countries. International Week aimed to develop and enhance relationships with these partners.

Visiting delegates delivered guest lectures to students and many did on a range of topics, including: Cross Cultural Communication, New Organisational Means of International Co-operation and

Expansion and Environmental Issues in Strategic Management to mention but a few. This presented staff and students with an insight into different global teaching styles and concepts whilst providing up to date international theories, topics and examples.

Throughout the week ABS hosted a range of events to promote the diversity of the population within the school including the International Celebration of Cultures, Erasmus Exchange Uncut and also the International Student Ceilidh. Visiting guests also formally presented their respective institutions to students and took part in the International Opportunities Fair, where students were given the opportunity to ask any general questions they wanted about either study or opportunities to work abroad, or specific questions relating to any of the institutions and host country.

Feedback from international visitors was positive and there was interest in International Horizons – ABS International Summer School 2010. More information can be found at <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/abs/aboutabs/page.cfm?page=70608>.

Gray's students compete in NCR Competition final

Product design students from Gray's School of Art battled against institutions from across Scotland on 18 December at the NCR national competition in Dundee to design self-service solutions of tomorrow.

The students were competing against their peers from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at the University of Dundee, Glasgow School of Art and Edinburgh University School of Arts.

The forty best contestants were given just two minutes to pitch their idea to a panel of judges from NCR and Scottish Enterprise in front of a live audience. Just seven students were called back to be cross-examined before the winner was selected.

Gray's student Niall Crossan was among those selected for the final round. He opened with a strong overview of the opportunities to enrich the social aspects of self-service checkouts in supermarkets through 'personalized' menu interfaces.

Gray's lecturer Sue Fairburn who was involved in the competition said, "While our students didn't win, they felt the event was invaluable as it gave the opportunity to see the design work of their counterparts across Scotland and to put their ideas to the test with a global high-tech client.

"It was fantastic to see the strengths of the various design programmes and confirmed the value of having a competition across all four institutions."

AGR launches hi-tech vision for oil and gas sector

AGR Petroleum Services (AGR) has launched a new collaboration to develop cutting-edge computer technology to dramatically reduce costs during oil and gas projects.

The company has joined forces with Scottish IT firm Codify to consider ways of using multi-touch computers to revolutionise the energy industry. The working group, called Envision, has been set up in response to a major lack of software applications for the computers which only became available on the UK market in March.

A key focus of the group, which will work closely with students from the University's IDEAS Research Institute, at the School of Engineering, will be to develop a real alternative to costly visualisation rooms which are currently used by engineers during planning phases of activity.

EVENTS DIARY 2009

For further information on all events, visit: www.rgu.ac.uk/news/eventsdiary

FEBRUARY	
28	University Boat Race
APRIL	
21	Non-Medical Prescribing Conference
28	Richard Noble talk
MAY	
20	IPE Conference
JULY	
13-16	Summer Graduation ceremonies

