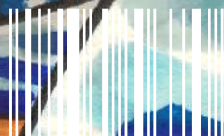


SPRING 2022

THE GRADPOST



GR4D P05T

THE EDITORIAL

Hello! Welcome to the 2022 spring edition of The GradPost!

This issue's themes focus on Growth & Moving Forward; applied via articles of migration, postgraduate studies and above all, student's achievements despite obstacles. This year, Basma and I wanted a complete overhaul on previous editions by having a fresh, visually creative, uplifting and accessible edition that celebrates student achievements, communities and personal growth.

After a tough 2 years and current tragedies – we want to help students feel comfortable and engaged again. We hope, with the help of our team's diverse articles, this edition will enable and inspire your own growth, abilities, and benefits of further education here at Kent.

Whether sharing stories of those who have succeeded despite hardships, moving past difficulties faced within our community, settling into foreign places or visiting new ones, our students have shared how they've turned hardships, rejections, and struggles into something more positive – and to let you all know that you're not alone in fears, stresses, or isolation.

Please see the end of this edition for upcoming events that may interest you, or get you out to meet new friends!

The GradPost will be offering students new opportunities for the next edition, so if you have an idea you're working on, or are interested in some editorial/proofreading experience, please email gradpost@kent.ac.uk

Stay safe everyone!

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Robert Coe

PhD student The Contemporary Novel



THE EDITORIAL

Movement is our own identity. We all move during stages of our life, and this brings us growth, a sense of belonging and future hope. Little Amal demonstrated this when she visited our Canterbury campus, to raise awareness about displaced children, and to support us in reflecting on our own roles to make a better future.

Canterbury and the University of Kent presented a powerful solidarity message with displaced children worldwide as she passed Templeman Library, where students, staff, and the public came together. Little Amal was accompanied by a procession from the Cathedral involving art, music and performances put together by local schoolchildren.

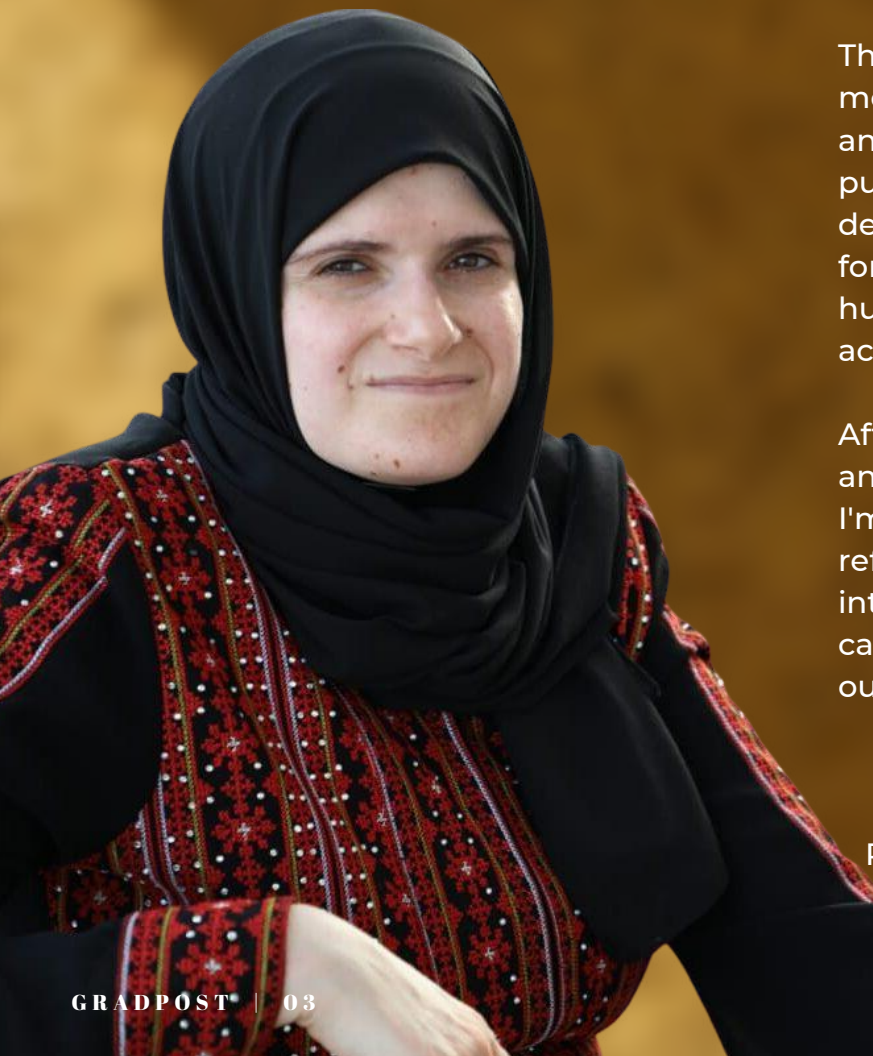
These interactions were a statement that displaced children are not, and will not, be alone. Our solidarity manifested through us celebrating a welcoming hand, soul, and spirit to displaced people. As a Palestinian Stateless refugee, who lived in Lebanon's Rashidieh Palestinian refugee camp, I'm looking forward to sharing my own knowledge and insights within my PhD at Kent.

Little Amal's Walk helped shed light on the millions of displaced refugee children and provided an opportunity for all of us to learn and reflect on our solidarity with them. I am a role model for women and girls wanting to access education and build their own careers.

The more refugees involved, the more we can change the narrative and take informed action. I hope that publishing migration research will develop more funding opportunities for displaced people, create localised humanitarian and development action, and inform social change.

After working in conflict zones, with an active role in humanitarian action, I'm delighted to bring the voice of refugees to academia, creating an interaction between those in refugee camps, professionals in the field and our higher education sector.

Co-Editor-in-Chief
Basma Taysir El Doukhi
PhD researcher in Migration Studies
(funded by the GCDC center)





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WE WERE THE ONLY UK UNIVERSITY TO HOST LITTLE AMAL'S THE WALK.

AN 8000KM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECT, FINISHING HER JOURNEY FROM CANTERBURY TO MANCHESTER.



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OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Joanne Eden-Sangwell
MA Autism

I originally applied for a Master's degree in Autism back in 2018. My motivation for applying was my eldest son who has autism; I decided that I wanted to learn everything I could to support him and never see autism as a barrier in our lives, but as an opportunity.

I was accepted onto the distance learning programme which was ideal for me to work around my children. At the time of applying, I had a 4-year-old, my eldest who has autism and a 1-year-old. I was ready to start the course in September 2019. However, in January 2019 my youngest, who had just turned 2, was diagnosed with leukaemia and began a 3 year treatment course.

The degree required me to attend in person for a week in Kent and it was not possible for me whilst caring for my little boy who had just moved onto maintenance treatment (less intense chemo) and was due an operation in September 2019. I could not start my course and deferred my entry.

By 2020, oddly the pandemic was a blessing in disguise as it meant everything was online and attending in person was no longer required. I was able to join the course!

I was really enjoying the course and learnt so much to understand my eldest son and support him. However, in February 2021 he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. He needed 4 injections of insulin a day and careful monitoring and management. My youngest was still on maintenance treatment and I was almost halfway through my Master's degree.

Somehow, I powered through. I asked for a couple of extensions and had one pass on condolence, and once my dissertation result came in just before Christmas 2021, I'd passed with merit overall!

By the time I attend graduation, my youngest will be coming up to the end of his first year at school, having completed just over 3 years of treatment battling leukaemia. My eldest will be coming to the end of Year 3 in mainstream school, where he is well supported (in part due to me feeling confident to speak out about autism). He is now on pump therapy for insulin, so he does not need 4 injections a day anymore, as it's all managed with the latest diabetes technology!

I think we are certainly a family who have overcome obstacles to achieve great things!

Follow my Instagram [@danceacouk](https://www.instagram.com/danceacouk) and Facebook page '[MommaBoss - Keep Dancing Little Ted](https://www.facebook.com/MommaBoss-KeepDancingLittleTed)' for updates!



SETTLING IN DURING THE PANDEMIC

Jessica Dawber
PhD student Chemistry

Starting my cotutelle PhD between Kent and Lille in September 2019 seemed like a dream come true. The opportunity to work on a collaborative international project towards a sustainable energy alternative, whilst living between my home and abroad, sounded amazing. The reality was that no one could have predicted the chaos that 2020 would bring. The adversities faced in a post-Brexit Europe and a global pandemic all coming together during my second year was a real test in the confidence of my work and myself.

I had left Britain during a lockdown and arrived as France was entering another. Navigating any new country is difficult. Doing so whilst having curfew restrictions and not having spoken any French since my GCSE days meant that I quickly had to catch on to a whole new French pandemic culture. Thus far, I have not been able to see any of my family or friends in the past year, either due to work commitments or because of the constantly changing travel disagreements between Boris and Emmanuel.

However, despite these challenges, I feel I have emerged a much better person at the end of this year in France. I have made so many friends from around the world, learnt a lot more about French culture than I ever could in a classroom, and feel settled enough to call this home and very sad that I must leave!





THERE'S NO GROWTH, WITHOUT STRUGGLE

I did not have much of a winter holiday. In three weeks, I had done three assignments, with one more to finish before we returned. Some say it is foolish to spend this much time on each, but, you see, I initially thought they would only take three days each. If I was to give out the highest quality of work, which I do, I must always struggle a lot. And I mean a lot.

I was often in agony after reading several books on a tiny aspect that didn't add up or felt like there must be an answer somewhere for it! But where? Just keep searching, I said, keep reading, try out this, try out that. But to no avail, so what could it be?

So I tried this: take the struggle, the walking around a problem, and keep approaching it from different angles or views, as a way of really understanding and owning that knowledge.

At times I thought "ahh that's just too much! I'll just have to take this shortcut," but my trouble is that I always want to give my best. So, I got back up and tried again. And again. It felt like when Jacob wrestled with God and said, "I won't give up until you bless me." Until I understood, until I could solve it, until I got my answer!

And when you finally get that answer, you know that you really earned it, worked hard for it, and nobody can take it from you.

Zsófia Baruwa
MSc Business Analytics

”

***MY TROUBLE
IS THAT I
ALWAYS
WANT TO
GIVE MY
BEST.***

“



DON'T LOSE HOPE, RESEARCH YOURSELF

I've always preferred to keep busy with work, sports and learning, I don't like being lazy. I struggled at school and in higher education. I had issues with myself, and as a result I felt like I had messed up.

I knew I wanted to help people, but nobody was there to help me. So I began to research myself. As I overcame issues in my working life, I realised I couldn't make decisions without the help of others.

However, as I continued to research myself, I decided alone that I needed to do a postgraduate degree. The University of Kent takes care of its students better than most institutions and tutors' doors are always open. Everyone has always been very approachable, warm and helpful towards me, and now I feel very hopeful I will be one step closer to overcoming my problems.

Mohammed Saiful Alam
MSc Project Management





AN ODE TO HOME

Home. How can a four-letter word carry so much meaning? Unfortunately, it does.

Back in September 2021, an anxious 26-year-old moved to the UK. The journey seemed intimidating, but she was ready to cross the Indian ocean and move to another continent. She was ready to take on the world.

Initially, the independence seemed amazing. To be able to walk anywhere she wanted to? Wow! That was impossible back home. To walk home alone at night? Even more impossible back at home. To gaze at the starry sky at 2am? She couldn't even fathom seeing so many stars in a metropolitan city like Karachi.

But to hug her mother? That was impossible in her new home. To cycle with her nephews down a steep hill? Alas, they were thousands of kilometres away.

She was confused. Is Canterbury now home, or is Karachi?

On the one hand, she loved the serene and green Canterbury. On the other hand, she missed the comfort of her own bedroom where she would wake up to the giant mural she herself had painted on the wall. She cooked well, but at times she missed her mother's warmly cooked food. There was once love behind each dish, but whilst in Canterbury, she cooked only to stop herself from starving.

Canterbury had everything. Yet she missed the familiar smell of home.

She didn't have the most perfect relationship with her parents, yet their presence meant so much.

She writes this on her smartphone while walking home from campus at 7pm. There are shards of glass bottles on the footpath. The streetlights are flickering and the moon is shining brightly. She's going home. But is home here, or is home where you long to go to?

Marzia Bilwani
MSc Computer Science

Movement & migration

Life is strange. It puts you in unexpected situations yet makes you pull through to the other side. It turns your fears into cherished moments that you would one day reminisce about as the good old days.

Never in my wildest dreams had I thought I would be 1000 miles away from my home and family. I was leaving everyone and everything I knew to be in a foreign land. I still remember how afraid I was before coming here, expecting my time to be full of solitude and sadness, how I would count the days towards my return. But life had other plans!

Belonging to a South Asian family, where the concept of independence is non-existent, coming here was a bizarre and bitter-sweet experience. There was this guilt of being happy alone, and simultaneously the elating freedom to do whatever I wanted! After the initial gloomy bouts spent yearning for a reunion with my family, this independent lifestyle grew on me. Here, I realised how much I love to cook, and surprisingly how good I am at it!



Another thing that turned my stay here into a welcoming one was the friends I made. It may sound cliché, but each of them, with their unique personality, have helped me grow. Even though it has only been around four months, I have learned a lot from them. The optimism of Aisha, the caring and helping nature of Talha, the humility in Rimsha, the pragmatic outlook of Soo Young, and Marzia's drive to try new things and enjoy life to its fullest.

My migration experience is not a sad one, but a blessing in disguise. I finally feel that I'm becoming a better version of myself! I wish the same for every student and staff who have shared such an experience!

Khurram Ahmed
MSc Statistical Data Science

IN PURSUIT OF RESILIENCE

IN PURSUIT OF RESILIENCE

Written by Olayemi Ejemai
Written by Olayemi Ejemai

MBA Business Administration
MBA Business Administration



To me, to be resilient means to be strong, courageous, and perseverant. But is resilience a destination or a goal? Is it attainable, or is it a continuous process?

I classify myself as resilient and strong, but I must confess that the last few months have shaken me with various setbacks and unforeseen challenges.

I doubted my strength, questioned my judgment, and prayed desperately for a triumph - especially when it seemed I only had stacks upon stacks of unchecked boxes.

While I am not out of the blue yet, I realised that my resilience comes not from me, but from the people around me, strangers who became my friends in a blink-of-an-eye; they became family.

Perhaps, we are just as resilient as the people around us.

So, do challenges summon us to be more resilient in ourselves, or is it due to the strength of others that we achieve such?

Is resilience a sprint or a marathon? Please share your thoughts!

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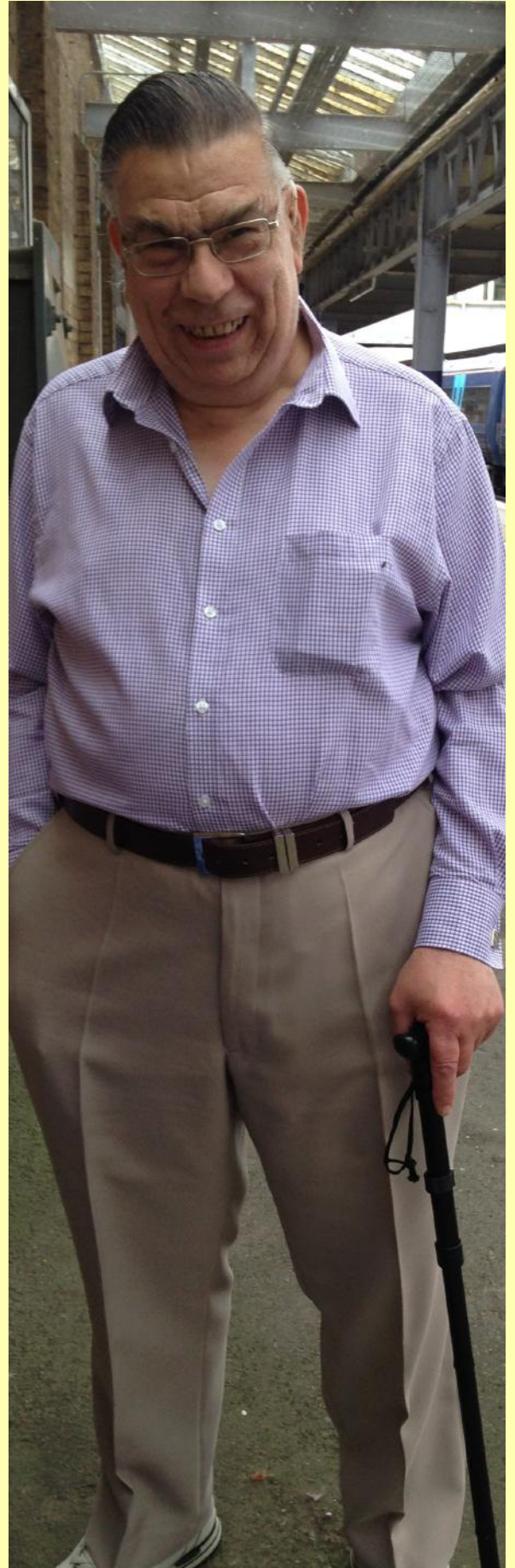
UNCLE JOHN, A TRIBUTE

"You're never too old to learn", was one of the idioms regularly used by my Uncle John. As a person whose educational opportunities were limited, he was singularly proud of me for continuing my education, and he was especially happy that I was doing it at the University of Kent.

For over five years in the 1970s John Tyler worked for the estates department with his father, my grandad Arthur, when the University was just a small cluster of colleges. They worked permanent nightshifts, cleaning and maintaining the communal areas, bars and - Uncle John's pride and joy - the hall at Rutherford. A frustrated carpenter, he loved the herringbone floor in the dining hall and took special pride in buffing and polishing it, right up to the edges, as he always used to tell me.

He was born in Holloway, North London, at the end of 1950, the last of three children – the middle of which was my father Paul – to Arthur and Rose. They lived with Arthur's mother Daisy, in a house in Axminster Road just off of Seven Sisters, a community John remembered as thriving and well-resourced with a plethora of small shops, pubs and cinemas within easy walking distance.

Life was difficult for John from the start. A life-threatening ear infection at the age of five led to numerous surgeries and a significant loss of hearing. The death of his mother, when he was just seven years old, left John to rely on his elder sister Joan to take care of him.



With no learning support he rapidly fell behind at school and subsequently found learning difficult until he left at the age of 15. By then Paul, John and Arthur had moved to Canterbury with Arthur's second wife, May.

John first secured work at Roebottom's nursery and it was here he gained his lifelong love of roses. He learned how to prune and care for all types of roses, and he looked after the gardens of most of our family members due to his green fingers. From here he worked at Barretts in Canterbury city centre as a warehouse worker and occasional electrician's mate. Arthur encouraged him to join him at the University of Kent and they worked happily together until Arthur passed away in 1974.

Finding the commute difficult, he left the University in 1976 and took up a position at Dover Police Station which he loved because it required him to sign the Official Secrets Act! He also enjoyed being nearer to my brother and I; he was a fantastic uncle, a regular and fun babysitter while my mother worked in the afternoons, a purveyor of holiday treats and an absolutely required presence at Christmas.

A lifetime of physical jobs, and a long walk to his last position at a plastics factory in Dover, took its toll on his health and he counted down the days until his retirement in 2015. To keep his spirits high, every year he would save in three big money tins and, in a solemn ceremony, we would open them in May or June and see what we could plan with the money for our yearly trips to London.

The last of these trips was only a couple of months before he died and although he struggled to walk to our familiar sites, I know it meant the world to him.

For the last three years I was Uncle John's carer, but in truth he looked after me as much as I looked after him. We would talk for hours on a Friday or Saturday night, perhaps going through old photos or listening to his collection of vinyl records. The only person more spoiled than me was his cat, Sid, a long-haired ginger who is now ruling the roost at my parents'.

Sadly, he passed away before he knew that I had been accepted for my PhD, but I know, considering his history with the place, that he would have been pleased and proud.

Uncle John died, rather unexpectedly, on 15 December 2021, five days after his 71st birthday; ever since, I have been looking for ways to pay tribute to him. I wrote a poem for his remembrance service and we played some of the songs we had listened to on his old record player. This is another tribute and I know he would have been proud to see his name in a University publication. I just wish I could tell him that I had lunch in Rutherford today.

Debbie Deveson
PhD student English


FROM THE FRONTLINE...

I joined the UK health and social care frontlines in early 2013 after landing a job as a support worker. Being a young migrant from a country with ambiguous healthcare structures and a slowly developing social care system, I was rather impressed with my new role. I had a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, some professional experience in my field, and a strong yet unclear interest in supporting people in their everyday lives rather than through scheduled therapy sessions. However, I did see therapeutic value in daily tasks and my new role helped me to articulate this further.

This was one side of the coin, the other was having one of my superiors telling me something like, 'you are too qualified, this is just care work'. These two conflicting discourses – acknowledging the key role that support workers play in people's lives while not fully recognising them as care professionals – seemed to accompany me in the years I spent working in the care sector. Apparently, such discourses were also shaping who I was becoming as a person as well as informing the professional and personal aspects of my identity.



... TO RESEARCH



Eight years, a Master's degree in Psychology, and numerous unsuccessful applications for doctoral funding later, I found myself finally receiving a scholarship to do PhD research in support work! I am now in my second year of the PhD and it feels as if two planets have collided: planet 'Being on the frontlines' with planet 'Researching the frontlines'.

What is the aftermath? A sense of growth and perhaps a sense of pride? I do feel that I have grown as a thinker, a practitioner, a researcher and, most importantly, as a human. And I am proud; support workers are an important part of the working population in this country. Even though I am certainly more privileged than others, entering academia via my care work experience has made me feel as if I am doing justice both to myself, and perhaps to all my colleagues over the years. In other words, it feels good to be 'just a care worker' who's researching care itself.

Georgios Mamolis
PhD candidate Applied Psychology



A DAY TRIP WITH

GIANT PANDAS

After I arrived in China, in December 2019, there was a place in my mind that I had to visit: the Giant Panda Research Center in Chengdu, Sichuan.

Beforehand, I visited the neighbourhood Buddhist temple for a cup of warm tea which was very calming and relaxing. The area was generally quiet despite Chengdu's nearly ten million population! The Wenshu Yuan Monastery also offers vegetarian food at about £3 a portion (lower than most restaurants in the area!).

A brief history of the Chengdu Giant Panda Reserve...

Twenty years after being founded in 1987 (when six giant pandas were saved from the wilderness), the reserve has seen over 124 panda births. It is now home to nearly 120 giant pandas and 76 red pandas. There are only around 2000 left in the world, and 70% of them are in the Sichuan Province. It is amongst the top conservational facilities and attracts tourists from around the world.



In a bus itself decorated as a panda, we headed for the Giant Panda Reserve (an hour away from our neighbourhood, Jiangxi Jie)! Around midday, despite a lot of people, it wasn't overcrowded and the giant pandas were quite playful, especially the little ones. 10,000 clumps of bamboo and bushes have been cultivated to feed them over a 500-acre space. This was done in order to simulate a natural environment for the pandas to breed.

Additionally, within the Panda Center in Chengdu, there is a museum which was founded to enhance the understanding of panda preservation and their natural environment. It includes three sections: the Giant Panda Hall, the Butterfly Hall, and the Vertebrate Hall. There are illustrations and a selection of Sichuan samples, including reptiles, amphibians, birds, insects, and fossils. There is also a library with thousands of books, research and documentation of the pandas natural biodiversity. We were there for around 3 hours and if you like pandas, you must visit!



Stefano Ivanov
MA Financial Management

The inspirational

STUDENT REP

I recall watching Barack Obama's 2004 speech at the Democratic National Convention for the first time, in 2015. I felt goosebumps all over my body, once it was over, I was speechless – struck by his story.

I was inspired, knowing I had finally found a leader I wanted to emulate. From that day, I did not just want to be a leader; I wanted to be the type to make a positive change in people's lives. During my first term, I decided to volunteer to be the student representative of the Project management master's programme. Here, I got to show my leadership skills inspired by the leaders that I admired. What I did not know was how far I would go to make sure I positively impacted the lives of my cohorts.

When I arrived in the UK, I had plenty of questions, and I had to seek the answers alone. Therefore, I promised myself that I would do so by helping other students, and I have a great relationship with each of them.

I knew that some of them would be hesitant to share their struggles, so I reached out to them, and I listened. I also made sure that I had an answer to their queries; it is typical for international students to have various questions.

I have been with my classmates through thick and thin and made it my duty to regularly check up on them.



Just to ask how they were managing would bring a smile to their faces.

As an attendee of several extra-curricular activities at the University of Kent, I inform my cohorts about the benefits of getting involved, and they know that I want them to succeed in the programme just as much as I do for myself.

I like to think that I have finally become an inspirational leader!

Fabian Akaeze
M.Sc. Project Management

How to improve your routine or **ESCAPE IT ENTIRELY!**

HALA WALLAH!



Like many students, your current routines may have become monotonous and boring, and what makes matters worse is our inability to easily integrate. This may cause depression and homesickness among students and may negatively affect our academic achievement.

When I was taking my pre-session course, there were weekly tours around Kent. These tours inspired and encouraged me to run such myself, to break the boredom of my weekly routine, integrate with my fellow students, and draw the attention of the students to the beauty of Kent and England, via several attractions and excursions. We started only with four, and now the group has grown to more than 50 undergraduate and postgraduate students for various city tours to Dover, Ashford, Margate, Ramsgate, Whitstable, London and more!

Amna Alasfour, a PhD student in Social Psychology, says, "The trips provide the possibility to visit destinations for relaxation, entertainment and expanding knowledge. It's an opportunity to communicate with students from different cultures and make friends. Moreover, by engaging in the group I knew how to use the trains to surrounding areas. The timelines are voteable, destinations are prepared in advance, their time management is great, and our feedback is valuable."

Akihiro Takahashi, Master's in General Law, says that, 'Everyone can suggest destinations for trips. It's a chance to make and meet many friends, have a fun time, and enjoy local restaurants.'

Additionally, Ahmed Ali, Master's in Reproductive Medicine, says 'It was never easy for me to find out about places to visit. Trips group is an exceptional opportunity to meet new friends and enjoy the tour experience'. Nour Sweilem, Bachelor's in Law, also says 'I've been on one trip with the group, and it was honestly one of the most unforgettable experiences I've had at university so far. Looking forward to many more!'

If you feel exhausted or want to change your routine, you are warmly welcome! Contact my email (sb2271@kent.ac.uk) or my WhatsApp (+966505697383)

Sohayeb Bahaziq, Founder
MA LLM, International Law

UPCOMING EVENTS

APR 18 - TOGETHERALL: MANAGING DEPRESSION & LOW MOOD (ONLINE)

APR 18-22 - MATCH WITH STUDENTS FOR COFFEE ON CAMPUS

APR 19 - CVS, COVER LETTERS AND APPLICATION FORMS

APR 20 - HOW TO GET STARTED WITH LINKEDIN

APR 20 - GARDENING CHALLENGE: PLANTING HERBS, VEG AND SMALL TREES FROM YOUR HOME COUNTRY TO SUPPORT POSTGRADUATE WELLBEING.

APR 21 - INTERVIEW SKILLS (+VIDEO INTERVIEWS).

APR 27 - HOW TO ANSWER NORMAL, TRICKY & DOWNRIGHT STRANGE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS!

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- DELE OGUNJUMELO (FEATURES)
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to all Canva Pro's creators and contributors.

Marzia Bilwani for all her amazing design efforts (including the hand-designed front cover!) and extra help.

Abigail Stravroulakis-McMahon & the Graduate and Researcher College.

All of our contributors to this edition.

The Arab Society, UKC Pakistan Society & KLS PG students' group.

And our proofreading team: Maria Leon Peña, Charlotte Hirst, Emily Young, Aaron Pugh & Abigail Stravroulakis-McMahon, for your quick and essential turnaround.

This publication is student-led and does not represent the views of the University of Kent.