

Summer 2019

University of Kent

theGradPost



Union update



Accessible theatre



Postgraduate experiences



A newsletter created by postgraduates for postgraduates

Editorial

Hello all, and welcome to the Summer 2019 edition of *The GradPost*!

It's that time of year now when exams have come to an end, but focus is demanded elsewhere. Yes, you guessed it... dissertations! Don't worry though, *The GradPost's* Summer 2019 issue will be full of tips on how to stay productive over the summer and survive the impending UK heat wave.

Succeeding our KGSA update, you will be able to read all about another student's journey from undergraduate to postgraduate as well as find a message from the University's Vice-President (Sports) regarding what there is to do over the summer period at Kent!

In case you missed it, at the end of April, the second Autism Arts Festival was hosted by the University. Thankfully, you can learn all about the festival's highlights in an article written by Krysia and George.

At the end of this issue, you will once again be able to read about the latest inputs from Gandalf regarding student life. You'll also have a go at another 'Test your brain' challenge!

We've been lucky to have had so many thought-provoking and creative article contributions thus far, and we hope that there will be more to come in the final edition. We are always looking for more people to join our team. So, if you are interested in taking on the role of an editor, proofreader, or photographer, you can contact *The GradPost* via gradpost-submissions@kent.ac.uk. If you just have stories, research, or experiences that you would like to share, please do!

The Editors

Antonio Kostalas

MSc International Business and Management

Shelly Lorts

PhD Medieval and Early Modern Studies
KGSA President

Cover image

Kent Researcher's Showcase 2019

KGSA update

Stepping into summer term



Summer is upon us, which means that dissertation and conference season are in full swing. Even though we may find ourselves chained to computers or cooped up in labs, archives, and libraries, the weather in Canterbury and beyond will allow us ample time and space to run around outdoors in the name of relaxation.

The spring term was productive for the KGSA. We had a chilly, but clear Bilbo walk on the Crab & Winkle Way, as well as a spring potluck for postgraduates in the Woolf Common Room. The spread of homemade cultural favourites were the perfect compliment to the fish and chips, and Bilbo appreciated every scrap that was sneaked to him under tables and behind backs.

We have been working hard to gear up for next year's cohort as well as to ensure a productive and socially balanced summer for current postgraduates. Along with participating in upcoming events, we encourage students who are sticking around during the next academic year to join the new Facebook group; conversations and connections are already starting, and we're getting hyped on the buzz. Plus, we can finally announce that the Woolf Common Room is getting a fantastic makeover and refurb! Drawings and plans are coming in for a whole new look, feel, and layout for the next academic year and we're honoured to be working with the Graduate School to make it beautiful as well as functional.

The summer in Canterbury will bring some heat, and those living in Woolf will already understand the challenges around that. Though we are working to find some solutions to toasty rooms, we already have a few practical tips to get ahead of the issue. First, be sure to buy a fan early. If a heatwave a la 2018 hits, those suckers will sell out quickly. On the really hot days, plunging your feet in cold water under your desk can help curb a rising body temperature. A wet washcloth around the neck will also help. Or, head out to the places on campus that offer cooler atmospheres for study, such as the Postgraduate Study Hub in the Senate building, the Woolf Common Room, or various catering spots on campus. Gandalf recommends a shaded spot outdoors. Luckily, the library will be quiet and rather empty over the summer, so don't let the rush of previous months deter you from checking it out.

As always, the KGSA is here to help and encourage. The summer workload can be tough, but be sure to spend some time away from your studies and enjoy the quieter time around campus and in town. Get some traveling done – laptops can go anywhere, so write on the beach or from a café in Paris. Let us know what you're up to and if you're in need of social interactions; planning events is right up our alley. We may even feed you!

Shelly Lorts
KGSA President



Union update

De-stress with physical activity

Hello! I'm Emily, your Vice-President (Sports) at Kent Union. I'd like to thank *The Gradpost* for inviting me to contribute to the issue, and join the discussions around relaxation and self-care during the summer.

As deadlines begin to creep up, you might find that you're beginning to feel the academic pressure of getting things done. This experience is different for everyone – some might find that this pressure is a useful catalyst to get 'in the zone' to complete work, but others might find this overwhelming and a detriment to productivity. In either case, it's equally important to ensure that you're looking after yourselves during this time, as well as ensuring you dedicate some time to yourselves by taking breaks from work. So, here is some advice to help you get through the summer:

It probably goes without saying that as Vice-President (Sports), sport and physical activity is something that I frequently engage with to relax and de-stress. The University Sports Centre is open in the summer term, and is often a lot quieter than during regular term time – so, if you're a member of Kent Sport, there are lots of opportunities to de-stress through physical activity. Aside from using the fitness suite, the fitness classes are a great way to exercise since group training provides the added benefit of social interaction. They offer a range of different classes, including yoga, Zumba, and spinning, but also some unique ones such as Japanese swordsmanship as well as something called 'sleepercise'! Make sure to take a look at the class timetable on the Kent Sport website to see the full list of classes. I frequently meet with the staff at Kent Sport, and I would love to work on improving the summer offerings for postgraduate students. If there are activities that you would like to see this summer that will help you during dissertation season, please get in touch and I can feed this back! My email is union-sports@kent.ac.uk.

You can also use your membership to book out the halls, courts, and pitches. One thing that definitely helped me last year during exam season was booking out a squash court. I'm not a squash player by any stretch of the imagination, but it was therapeutic to hit something really hard to get out some stress. We are also one of very few universities that offers outdoor grass tennis courts, which will be available to book during the summer and, if the weather's nice, it's a fantastic opportunity to get out in the sunshine.



Another way to make use of your Kent Sport Membership is to utilise the Cycle Hub, which is based at the Pavilion in Parkwood. A Gold or Silver membership includes the use of the Cycle Hub, where you can hire a bike for the day. This could be a fantastic opportunity to go on a bike ride and get some fresh air, explore Canterbury a bit more, or take a trip down the Crab & Winkle Way and visit Whitstable for the day.

Ultimately, however you're feeling about your workload, it's important to remember that not all days are the same, and some days will be better than others. I've been reading a book on Epicurean Philosophy, and one chapter that I related to centred around 'flow'. This is when you are so engrossed in an activity that time appears to pass quickly. I could relate to this as memories of writing my undergrad dissertation last year came flooding back. There were some days where I would be on an absolute roll, feeling like I have made so much progress, but other days I would feel like I'd fallen head first into a brick wall.

Looking back now, I realise that's all part of the process, and it's okay to go through peaks and troughs of progress – and most importantly, putting time aside for yourself during these periods of unproductivity is what can kick-start your motivation. So, in short, embrace the cycle of productivity, and take some time for yourself. I've spoken a lot about sport and physical activity to de-stress, but it's not the only thing you can do to unwind. There will be plenty going on in the Gulbenkian over the summer, so make sure to check out their events. And dare I say that reading can be useful to relax (although I'm sure you're fed up of books!), but, most importantly, do what works best for you and be kind to yourself.

If you have any questions or queries around activities that are taking place over the summer, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me or any of the other officers. On behalf of the team, I wish you the best of luck with your dissertations, deadlines, and research!

Emily Window
Vice-President (Sports), Kent Union

Researcher showcase

Graduate School Prizes

The Graduate School at the University of Kent works consistently to recognise and reward those who go beyond their duties as students, instructors, and support staff as they work to make the postgraduate experience excellent. The nominees for this year's Graduate School Prizes included some of the best that Kent has to offer, and blew away a review panel that had a hard time picking winners.

In the end, the nominees who stood out were the ones whose applications demonstrated a dedication to producing work and serving the community in creative and innovative ways that far exceeded the expectations of their roles. Winners included researchers who edited and published their undergraduate work while producing amazing postgraduate studies, students melding creativity with academics in order to reach a wider community, supervisors implementing new tactics of support and encouragement, and centre administrators who showed an unyielding dedication to the students they represent.

Congratulations to this year's winners of Graduate Schools Prizes:

Winners of the Postgraduate Research Prize

Ann Christine Kinzer – PhD Candidate, School of European Culture and Languages

Chloe Johnson – PhD Candidate, School of Biosciences

Katja May – PhD Candidate, School of English

Winner of the Research Degree Supervisor Prize

Dr Edward Morgan-Jones – Senior Lecturer in Comparative Politics, School of Politics and International Relations

Winner of the School Director of Graduate Studies Prize

Dr Catherine Robinson – Director of Graduate Studies, Kent Business School

Winners of the Postgraduate Administrator Prize

Angela Whiffen – Postgraduate Administrator, School of Arts

Claire Taylor – Centre Manager, Centre for American Studies and Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Winner of the Postgraduate Teacher Prize

Recep Onursal – PhD Candidate and Assistant Lecturer, School of International Relations and Politics

Second Annual Researchers' Showcase



The Graduate School and research students celebrated the end of another successful academic year of research with the Second Annual Researchers' Showcase (formally known as Postgraduate Festival). The full-day event allowed researchers from Masters, PhD, and post-doctoral levels to present their work via a poster contest as well as through lectures, talks, and workshops.

The Researchers' Showcase was created in 2018 with the aim of allowing emerging academics the chance to present their work to their peers and community at the University of Kent. Presenters apply for the showcase to practice the skills of exhibiting their work and to celebrate their accomplishments during their postgraduate careers. This year's cohort of presenters included students and post-docs across disciplines.

Starting bright and early, students, faculty, and staff gathered in the Sibson lobby to wander through the posters and listen to researchers discuss their work. After the first round of talks, all were invited to a barbeque lunch, courtesy of the Graduate School, which gave attendees the chance to mingle as well as to vote on posters and presentations.

The post-lunch awards ceremony celebrated winners of the Graduate School Prizes – an application-based awards scheme – and participants from the day, including a crowd-favourite poster and presenter: Paul Allain, Dean of the Graduate School, presented the awards along with a few words about each winner and their accomplishments during their time at Kent. After another round of talks, the day concluded with a drinks reception presented by the Graduate School and the Kent Graduate Student Association.

Shelly Lorts

PhD Medieval and Early Modern Studies

3 Minute Thesis Winners

First place

William Mason

School of Pharmacy

'Is the Podocyte Skeleton the Key to a Healthy Kidney?'

Runner Up

Henry Sheehy

School of Physical Sciences

'Time-Reversal Symmetry Breaking in Superconductors'

Poster Competition Winners

Winner

Katy Bruce

'Outstanding Research Poster for Sciences'

Winner

Sukanya Ravi

'Outstanding Research Poster for Humanities'

Winner

Laura Thomas-Walters

'Outstanding Research Poster for Social Sciences' and 'People's Choice' vote

From undergraduate to postgraduate

What do you do with a BA in English? What is my life going to be?

I came to university with a love of novels and vague ideas of going into 'publishing' or 'professional writing' or 'education', with no idea whatsoever of what any of those careers entailed.

I saw the musical *Avenue Q* in 2010, when I was a second-year undergraduate at Kent, studying for my own BA in English and American Literature. The song 'What do you do with a BA in English?' really struck a chord with me. The 'four years of college and plenty of knowledge have earned me this useless degree' lyric was, and still is, pretty dispiriting, and not what I wanted to hear when I still had a year left of my degree. It was during this year that I discovered my passion for eighteenth-century literature. The compulsory second year modules gave a varied overview of the century, and I took any course I could on the subject during my third year, focusing on literature and the body, and the Gothic novel. I applied for the MA in Eighteenth Century Studies the following year and graduated with distinction in 2012. Again, the song from *Avenue Q* echoed through my head: but now, what do you do with an MA in English?

Due to ill health, my life stagnated for a while. I had a few years of 'real life' and 'proper jobs' after graduating, but knew that I wanted to come back to the subject that I loved when I was able to. At work, I joked with customers that I was the most overqualified shop worker who would ever sell them their daily newspapers.

It is so surreal to now be in the second year of my PhD, eleven years after first arriving at Kent as a wide-eyed fresher, and to have taught on the module that spurred my own interest in the subject. Seeing students asking the same questions that I, myself, asked ten years ago is amazing; especially when I am the authority who should know the answer by now. Attending lectures (as a far more diligent student than I used to be) and gaining a new understanding on concepts I thought I already understood is incredible.

Some things, however, never change. I still lurk in the same corner of the library I used to, rather than explore the enormity of the rest of the library. Origins is still the best place on campus for watching the World Cup and pretending to do work.

Now the big question: what do you do with a PhD in English? I'm not entirely sure. But 'somehow I can't shake the feeling I might make a difference to the human race'... nah. I didn't think you'd buy that.

Megan Batterbee
PhD English



Accessible theatre



Kent PhD student takes research on tour

A play that was developed as part of a PhD research project at Kent is getting ready to start its run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2019.

Kasia Senyszyn, a second year PhD student in the School of Arts, is researching how to make theatre more accessible to people with hearing or sight loss, and she is using her research to embed captioning and audio description techniques into the show. Her thesis focuses on how to scale access provision for amateur theatre companies, and she wants to prove that you don't have to have mega budgets to make plays and spaces more accessible.

The project includes adapting the script with the playwright and working with access practitioners and D/deaf and visually impaired members of the local community to develop the accessible strategies. Kasia and her team, who have formed the Parrot Theatre Company to develop the production, will then produce and rehearse the show and take it to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2019.

Eleana Gabriel, an undergraduate student in the School of Engineering and Digital Arts, has been commissioned to create animations that will be incorporated into the captions to make them part of the aesthetic instead of just a bolted-on access service. The company is also working with a musician who is composing a score for the show. This will enable blind and visually impaired spectators to experience changes in tone or atmosphere that are usually indicated by lighting or actors' facial expressions.

Kasia says: 'By taking the show to Edinburgh, we can hopefully inspire other theatre makers and theatre lovers to think more creatively about access. It doesn't have to be a last-minute add-on that disrupts the experience of the show as techniques can be integrated into the performance so that everyone can have an equal opportunity to enjoy it. I've learned so much from my research at Kent so far, and I'm really excited to see it working in action and having a real impact on the theatrical landscape'.

There are 11 million people in the UK that have hearing or sight loss. Studies have shown that 80% suffer from anxiety, isolation, or depression due to exclusion from social or cultural activities. Kasia and her team aim to change this by creating an accessible production and presenting it at one of the biggest theatrical festivals in the world in the hopes that accessibility will become more mainstream. It has already caught the eye of Kent alumna and theatre critic Lyn Gardner, who has expressed an interest in attending the performance in Edinburgh and writing a review.

The play, Mark Wilson's *Talk*, is about the introduction of psychotherapy in the early 20th century and is about the importance of being able to tell your story. It features the real-life struggles of two doctors at Bethlem Hospital as they work to abolish punitive and restraint treatments of patients. The team thought that this was the perfect platform to raise issues of accessibility and communication. Kasia's business partner and co-director, Roanna Bond, is a psychotherapist and drama therapist:

'Mental-health care and accessibility are intrinsically linked; it is about having a voice, being heard, and an inherent fairness of access. People should be able to have an equitable experience of the world and feel that their views and stories are valid. With the Parrot Theatre Company, we want to end the stigma surrounding both mental health and disability and to support people at risk of social isolation'.

After *Talk* finishes in Edinburgh, the company hopes to work with businesses and schools to offer workshops, training, consultancy, and outreach, and to bring theatre to care homes, prisons, and refugee holding centres, so that barriers to accessing the arts are removed – or at least reduced.

There will be a preview of *Talk* at the Gulbenkian Theatre on Saturday 20th July 2019 at 7.30pm. The performance is free, although organisers will be asking for donations to support the development of the research. The show, both at the Gulbenkian and in Edinburgh, will be captioned and audio description has been embedded into the script so that it is accessible for people with hearing and sight loss.

To support the company and Kasia's research, please check out their upcoming events and fundraising activities via the @ParrotTheatreCompany Facebook page or find out more at www.parrot-theatre.co.uk.

Kasia Senyszyn
PhD Drama

Autism Arts Festival 2019

Creativity, self-expression and Autistic Space

At the end of April (Autism Awareness Month), the university hosted the second Autism Arts Festival, a biennial event organised by Dr Shaun May from the School of Arts. This event celebrates autistic creativity and is a fully accessible space where autistic/neurodivergent artists can exhibit their work. The festival encompasses a wide variety of genres and media, including both professional performances, book-readings, talks and artwork of many types as well as open mic sessions for attendees to present and perform their own music, comedy, poetry or songs. Building on the inaugural festival two years ago, this festival added an artist development day before the main festival, which ran workshops and panels by established autistic artists to support the work of emerging talent.

The festival also created a range of interactive experiences for autistic people of all ages and support needs to enjoy. This included a sensory circus, Makaton storytime, and Sparklies in the Dark (unstructured sensory play for people of all ages using UV light and glowsticks). Other highlights included relaxed film showings, an all-night Avengers marathon, autism research as explained through photos of cats and the phenomenal Annette Foster's 'Super Autie Gang' performance which explored uncovering what it means to be a late diagnosed autistic person and the finally finding out 'who you really are'.

The Autism Arts Festival is also a space for autistic people to simply meet up with each other and make new friends. It's a common misconception that autistic people do not want friends, and while research has reported that autistic people can often have 'smaller social networks', this is usually caused by being misunderstood and stigmatised by our non-autistic peers rather than a lack of desire for friendship on the part of the autistic person. There is a dearth of opportunities for autistic adults to meet each other in Kent, and people travelled to the festival from as far away as Scotland, Wales and Germany. Since many of us are not diagnosed as autistic until adulthood, we have often experienced a lifetime of social isolation before we find this vibrant community. To discover that there are other people who think and experience the world in the way we do is the most incredible joy. Many autistic people (including the authors of this article) take great comfort from making friends, contacts and connections, with other autistic people from all walks of life, it can feel like finally coming home.

Where such opportunities exist for autistic people to come together, this has become known as 'autistic space'. However 'autistic space' does not only provide an opportunity for people to meet each other. 'Autistic space' can also refer to a space for autistic people to convene and 'just be' without the pressures and constraints that might be expected in 'non-autistic space'.



'Autistic space' involves us being able to be who we are, without the expectation or need to cover up our differences to meet social norms; for example by forcing ourselves not to stim*, or by faking eye contact, to avoid a 'spoiled identity' as Erving Goffman would call it. 'Autistic space' allows for us to explore more authentic versions of ourselves, which is political act in itself when we are daily faced with living in a society which sees us as defective. Autistic people are stereotyped as difficult, challenging and awkward; we are branded as looking weird and acting strangely but from our perspective, it is often the non-autistic people who are challenging. The research increasingly supports the theory that this social mismatch between autistic and non-autistic people works both ways. A popular analogy in the community is that autistic people are like cats and non-autistic people are like dogs; a cat is not a defective dog, a cat is simply different to a dog.

Another key factor of 'autistic space' is that fact that it is a dynamic entity. Autistic people coming together create such a space, and we need to 'learn' how to be in such a space. This is because it involves personally deconstructing how we act in social spaces, and being more aware of when we are hiding who we actually are (known as masking). Most of us have grown up without such space or peers who understand the lived experience of being autistic. Most of us are also used to being judged and we may not even realise the impact this has on our quality of life and mental health. Whether we knew we were autistic or not, we have had to hide who we truly are.

Therefore, the crux of 'autistic space' is a sense of belonging; this is a recognised psychological need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Meeting people who despite being from all various walks of life, cultures and backgrounds, still share many of the same internal lived experiences is the most profound joy. The authors and many other autistic people within the university and far beyond will look forward to many more festivals like this in the years ahead.

Krysia Waldock
PhD Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

George Watts
MA Autism Studies

You can follow the authors of this article on Twitter at [@krysiawally](https://twitter.com/krysiawally) and [@autgeek](https://twitter.com/autgeek)

*Stimming – informal term for self-stimulatory behaviour. All humans have self-stimulatory behaviour, for example clubbing once a week, however stimming by autistic people is often perceived with a higher stigma attached, for example rocking, hand flapping, using a stim toy (e.g. a fidget spinner), playing with hair. This helps us process the world around us.



Postgraduate experiences

Living with housemates

Having lived in Woolf for a year at the start of my PhD, I wanted to find an alternative. As convenient as Woolf is for the library, starting teaching this year meant that I wanted some distance from campus in order to separate my home life from my work and my research.

I now live with four other PhD students off campus, so although it is a shared house, it isn't the traditional 'student house'. There was visible relief on our landlord's face when he met us for the first time, as he realised we weren't going to trash the place. We are all in our mid- to late-twenties, relatively clean and tidy, considerate in terms of noise, and we endeavour to make our house look 'homey'. We all have a mutual respect for our workloads, can commiserate over hard deadlines, and have a sounding board for ideas if we get stuck in our writing.

While I miss the convenience of living on campus, and being able to walk to the library in the middle of the night for a book if I needed to, living off campus has definite perks. I live five minutes away from Canterbury campus on the bus, and a ten-minute walk from the city centre, which is very handy as I cannot afford to keep a car. There is a terrific butcher's shop, grocery store, and a great fish and chip shop down the road.

We have a garden, which is lovely on hot summer days and currently has a family of fox cubs running around it. Having a bathtub is a real luxury after a year of showers. We purposefully picked a house with a spare room, so we can have houseguests to stay without the house feeling crowded.

That's not to say there isn't a stash of alcohol on top of the kitchen cupboards, or the occasional clash when we need the bathroom at the same time in the mornings, but house sharing as an adult is so different from my undergraduate experience. It has been wonderful to live with housemates who can appreciate all of the nuances of PhD life.

Megan Batterbee
PhD English

Commuting from Medway as a Masters student

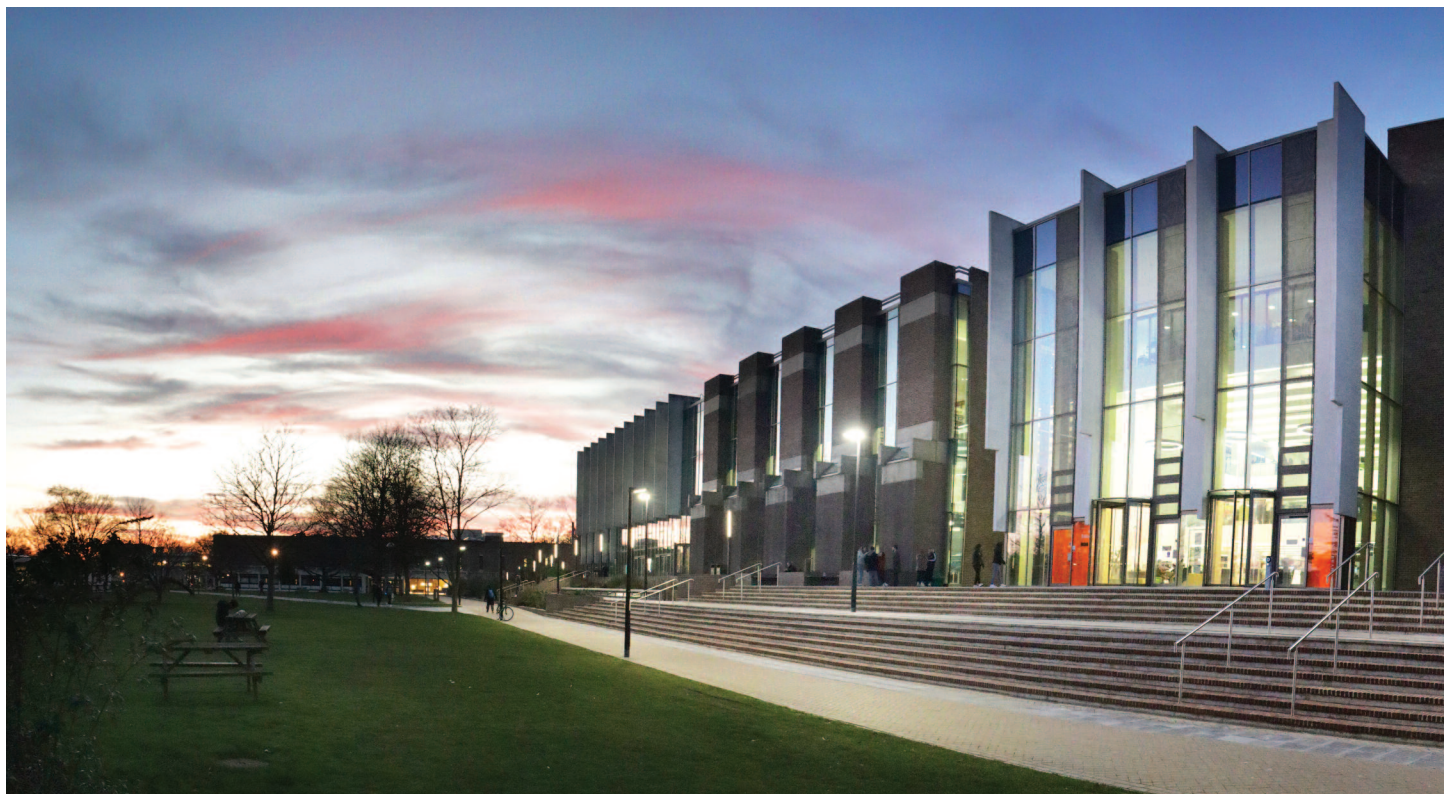
Just before I started my Masters, I moved in with my boyfriend in Gillingham. Both of our courses are based in Canterbury, but, as he has kids (and it's cheaper rent), we decided to live in the Medway towns and commute in whenever we had a class. While I am no stranger to the daily commute – that's what I had to do for a rural secondary school – the four years of undergrad and the new-found freedom that comes with living in the same town meant I was definitely out of practice!

As the University has two campuses, it runs a free shuttle bus between the two every day during term time. There are definitely pros and cons to commuting. The bus takes about 45-50 minutes, which gives you time to catch up on academic reading, or reading for pleasure, or even listen to a podcast. The major disadvantage I have found is that you are tied to the bus times and it can get busy at peak travel times. However, as the buses go until midnight from Canterbury, it means I've been able to continue attending society events in the evening, knowing there is a free service to get home.

Lydia Hall
MA Creative Writing

Living in Woolf College

At first, I thought that living on campus would feel weird. The last time I lived on campus was in my 2015-2016 academic year as I commenced my undergraduate studies. However, I am glad that I made the decision to come to Woolf. It's been so convenient and enjoyable. During the last two terms, all of my classes were just a five-minute walk away, so there was no need to wake up extra early (unless, you know, that's your thing). Not only that, but living on campus gives you the opportunity to meet countless people, many of whom are international students coming to the UK for the first time.



For me, the only downside to living on campus is food shopping. For the best deals on food, the ideal place to go is into town. However, thanks to the internet, we can order food online and get it delivered to our front doors! But, personally, I like to take the bus into town and physically go to the store. I think it's important to change one's scenery every now and then, especially if you spend most of your time on campus, like me.

The Woolf Common Room is also a great place to do work, or even just hang out and catch up with friends. The library can often get very busy, particularly during exam seasons, so the common room – or even the Senate building, which has opened recently as a study hub for postgraduates – is a great place to go and relax. Ironically, I neglect using either one of the study hubs for revision as I prefer to study from my room, in solitude.

One more great aspect that living in Woolf has to offer is that you can always be sure that the College's notorious protector is watching you from somewhere. Yes, I am referring to Gandalf: the guardian of students, shield of Kent, chaser of birds, eater of small critters, the monochrome.

Antonio Kostalas

Msc International Business and Management

Commuting from Medway as a PhD student

I currently live in Medway and commute to Canterbury, as my family comes from and currently lives in Medway. I personally drive down to the Canterbury campus, as I live some distance from the shuttle bus stop.

I quite like living outside of Canterbury (but with the ability to come in), as I feel after a day's work, or a day of back-to-back meetings, a change of scenery is necessary. I can really switch off when away from the University, as I'm not very good at resting with a to-do list the length of my arm.

Also, living at home in Medway means I have the use of both the Templeman and Drill Hall libraries. I can change up where I do my research and the desk I sit at – I find I get distracted if I sit in the same seat all the time! The resources in both libraries also slightly differ, so I can choose where I work according to what I need.

I've found being a part-time and commuting student that I've had to be creative in how I meet people. I've met people through KGSA events, through being the PGR rep for my centre and representing other students, and other events on campus.



It does require a bit of 'putting yourself out there', but I've found I can give people the best of me if I'm not with other stressed students 24/7! I do have friends, contacts and colleagues outside of the University too, so I've found I'm outside the 'university bubble' and can keep a balance in regards to my mental health and the demands of PhD students.

Krysia Waldock

PhD Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Living alone in Canterbury

I'm a bit older than most students at the Canterbury campus. I've celebrated my 26th birthday for several years now, and will continue to do so until someone finally tells me that I can't pass for mid-twenties anymore. Being in my 'twenties' (let me live in my fantasies), and having had several living experiences at different universities while earning different degrees (I've lived in dorms, sorority houses, student apartments, shared homes...I even did a stint in Woolf last year), I've decided that living alone is just where my head and personality are these days.

I like the quiet and I like to do whatever I want without anyone around to make me feel weird about it. Plus, I'm used to living in my own home in the States, so perhaps I've outgrown the housemate situation...you know, because I'm 26, now.

I live in a terraced house right outside the West Gate and have a large, fenced-in garden. Bilbo, my desert dingo, loves that he has his own space for sniffing and playing King of the Jungle. I love that my neighbours invite me over for tea, and that all I can hear during the day is birds chirping or my opera-signing neighbour to the other side practicing his scales. It's a far cry from the first home I rented in Canterbury, which I left a few months ago due to an upstairs bathroom that threatened to fall through the kitchen ceiling.

PhD research and writing can be isolating, and so can living alone, but the fact that I can spread my work out over two stories and two living rooms means that my space functions solely for my research, because that's what I'm here to do. It allows me to craft a space and a daily flow that serve my purpose. It also means that if I'm struck by a bolt of genius, I can leave the dirty dishes or the dog-hair lined floors for few days. Nobody else needs to navigate my mess.

Living so close to the city centre means that I'm never alone for too long. I receive messages all the time from people who have come to town for their shopping or errands and want to pop in for a glass of wine in my garden, or who sternly tell me to put on some 'real' clothes and come to a pub. Sometimes I'm far too busy sitting in my PJs and staring at a wall, figuring out just the right wording for why Louis XIV's mistress would want to poison him, but usually I'm up for some social time and a glass of red – sans early modern pharmaceuticals.

Shelly Lorts

PhD Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Relaxation tips

“My dog (Sherlock) and I run through the grounds really early in the morning. He frightens the rabbits away. I like to watch the seasons change through nature, especially the trees.”

Susie Bass
MA Autism Studies

“I like going for a walk through the wooded areas on campus, especially when there’s wildlife like bunnies out.”

Jen Phillips
MA Autism Studies

“A short stroll along from the Medway campus is the Strand, which has an outside swimming pool, and a short walk along the river leads you to Riverside Country Park, which is a very pretty area to walk in and relax.”

Lydia Hall
MA Creative Writing

“If you wander way up into Westgate Gardens, it feels very hidden and isolated because people tend to hover at the end nearest the Pound. It is a good place to relax.”

Ellis Spicer
PhD History

“The Franciscan Gardens are open to the public during the summer months. It is so beautiful there.”

Kate Docking
PhD History

“I try to get out of Canterbury itself to escape stress. Taking the bus to Herne Bay, or the train to Ramsgate, takes about half an hour and gets you to the coast. Just having a paddle in the sea or walking along a beach instantly soothes me.”

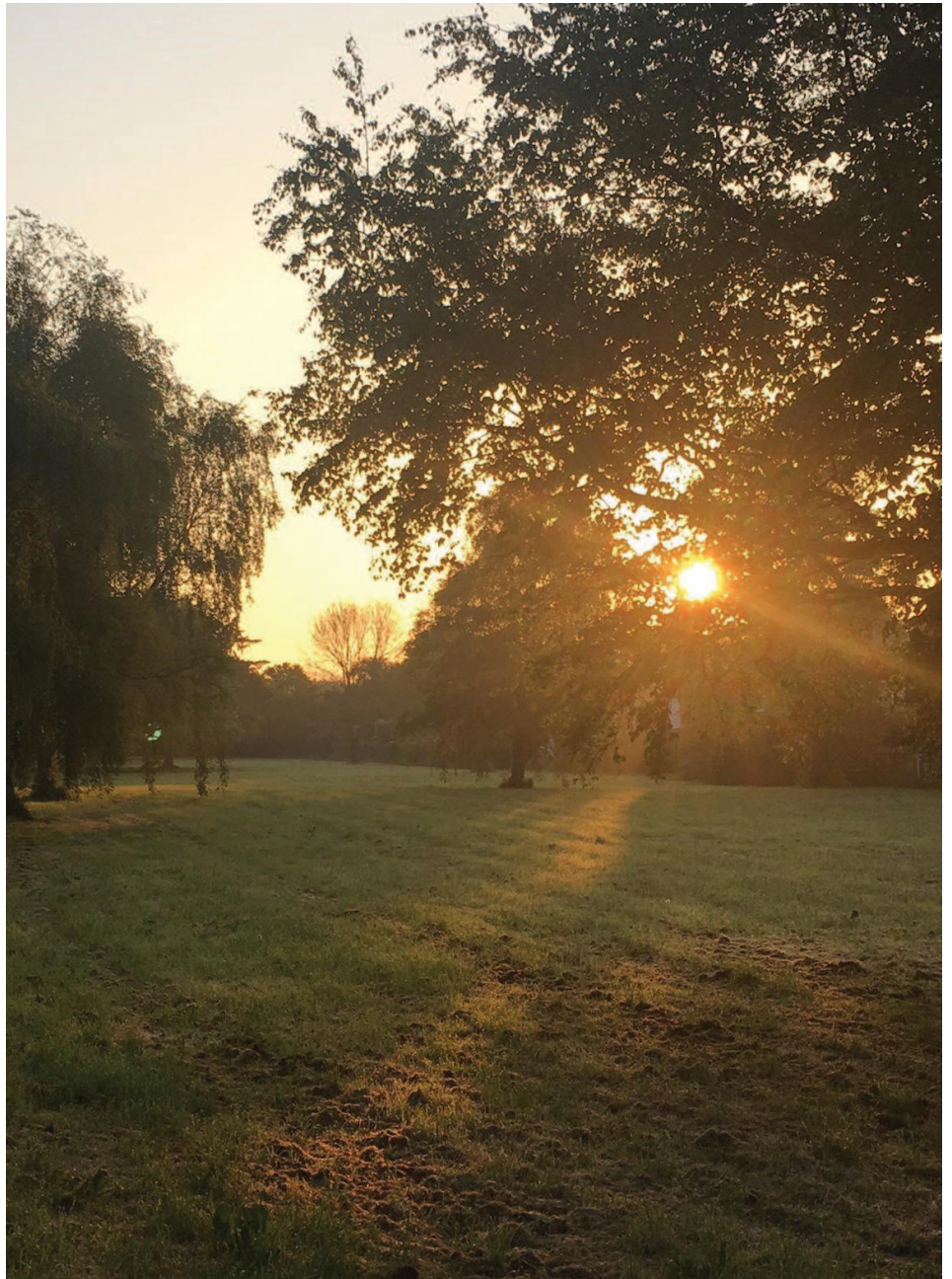
Megan Batterbee
PhD English

“I think wine is superbly relaxing.”

Shelly Lorts
PhD Medieval and Early Modern Studies

“The best way to relax is for other people to make you relaxed. Let me explain: I do nothing. My life is one of leisure and being adored, but I am most relaxed when postgraduates – full of love, admiration, and servitude – scratch my ears or stroke my back as I lie in the sun.”

Gandalf the Black and White
Professor of Kingship and Postgraduate Taming



Puzzles and quandaries

Test Your Brain!

How well do you know your university?

- 1 **When was the University founded?**
 - a 1945
 - b 1955
 - c 1965
- 2 **The Cornwallis cluster is commonly referred to as what?**
 - a A pentagon
 - b A hexagon
 - c An octagon
- 3 **How many square metres is the Templeman library?**
 - a 14,670
 - b 16,450
 - c 18,750
- 4 **How many types of accommodation complexes are there at Kent?**
 - a 7
 - b 9
 - c 10
- 5 **How many bus stops are there on campus?**
 - a 6
 - b 8
 - c 10
- 6 **Where is Jarman 1 located on campus?**
 - a School of Arts
 - b Rutherford College
 - c Jennison Building
- 7 **How many accommodation blocks are there in Woolf College?**
 - a 5
 - b 7
 - c 9
- 8 **When did construction on the Templeman library first begin?**
 - a 1966
 - b 1969
 - c 1971
- 9 **What is the name of the route that connects Canterbury to Whitstable?**
 - a University Path
 - b St Stephen's Way
 - c Crab and Winkle Way
- 10 **What year was Kent's Medway campus established?**
 - a 2003
 - b 2004
 - c 2005

Answers:
1 c
2 c
3 c
4 b
5 c
6 a
7 c
8 a
9 c
10 b

Gandalf's Corner

Dear Gandalf,

The summer term can be hard. I'm having trouble writing and getting in the right mindset to work when the weather is so nice. I just want to play outside with my friends or nap in my super-warm room. Do you have any suggestions for writer's block or ways to get myself in the mood to work?

Sincerely, Just Wanna Have Fun

Dear Just Wanna Have Fun,

I'm glad you brought up napping. Not only is this my favourite past time, but it's also my favourite topic. I also love to talk about cream and catching pigeons, but humans are rubbish at those conversations.

Of course dissertations are hard, but this what you signed up for, remember? If this process weren't hard, you wouldn't be growing as a person or as an academic. It's just like learning how to butcher a mouse properly: it's mostly a mental game, but you *do* have to get your paws dirty. I've learned from watching/stalking/observing the postgraduates of Woolf for years that the most important thing to do is to show up. Schedule regular times to work or write, and stick to them. Hanging out with friends and playing outside – and I sincerely hope you mean playing with and snuggling me when you say that – is all well and good, but needs to come outside of your working hours.

There might be days when you sit down at your scheduled time and stare at your computer screen, screaming inside and wishing that you had decided to skip graduate school and had opted instead to become a YouTube star or professional footballer, but, eventually, you'll have Pavlov-ed yourself into being productive at those particular times.

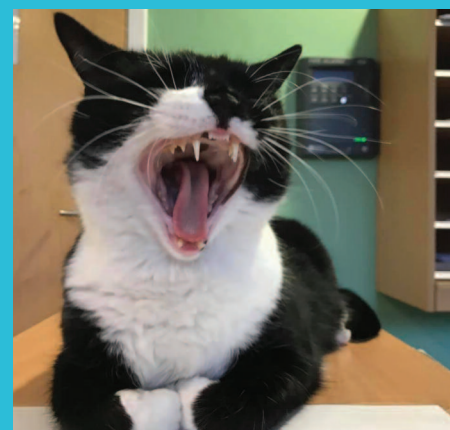
Next, be sure that you do fit in break times. Blow off steam whenever possible. The trails around campus and in town are perfect spots for runs or walks. You could also pick up a mindless, yet productive hobby that you can do on autopilot, like embroidery or anxiously cleaning between the tiles in your bathroom with a toothbrush. When you activate that part of the brain, the part that is working on your dissertation can process in the background, speculating and making connections you wouldn't see otherwise. In fact, make a day of hiding catnip for me around campus. It will get you outside and doing a physical task that benefits me. Win-win. The bottom line is that, when you force things, they push back, which means you will end up frustrated and stuck.

If you're feeling super-duper stuck – like lying-in-bed-in-the-fetal-position stuck, or only-want-to-eat-ice-cream-and-binge-Netflix stuck – you'll need to get tough on yourself. That's when sheer force of will comes in; I know because this is how I feel when I have to move from my napping position in a stream of sunlight through the Reception building window to a different comfy place to sleep.

You'll need to be your own coach, but you can start small. Make yourself turn the computer on. That's a nice step. Then work up to doing just five minutes of work. You might be surprised to find that just that act of starting will get the flow going. It's 'objects in motion' and all that.

And remember, stroking animals relieves stress. Stroking cats, especially the ones who wear a tuxedo for you every single day, will turn you into a superhuman, dissertation-writing machine. I say this because there is talk of therapy dogs on campus, which is something I do not condone. All attention should absolutely be mine.

Gandalf of Woolf



What's on

Got spare time or need a break? *The GradPost* team recommends these events...

The Infamous Canterbury Ghost Tour

Weekends, July – August 2019

Canterbury City Centre

Join the infamous Canterbury Ghost Hunter on a 90 minute tour of Canterbury's dark side with an entertaining blend of history, humour and haunting.

The Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2019

6 July – 6 October 2019

The Beaney House, Canterbury

The Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2019 is the leading international competition, open to all, which celebrates and promotes the very best in contemporary portrait photography from around the world.

Medway Mile 2019

19 July 2019

Rochester Castle, Rochester

Join thousands of other runners, joggers and walkers for the 12th annual Medway Mile.

Gulbenkian Art 31 Poetry Pop-up – New Young Radicals of Canterbury + Open Mic

20 July 2019

The Beaney House, Canterbury

Ten young poets of Kent will perform spoken word developed in the 'Radical Roots' poetry intensive, mentored by poet powerhouse Kat Francois, and supported by Apples and Snakes and the Gulbenkian.

Medway's Big Ride

21 July 2019

Rochester

The historic cobbled streets of Rochester will be taken over by bikes on Sunday 21 July as Medway plays host to some of the nation's top riders. British Cycling has chosen Rochester for the HSBC UK | National Circuit Championships 2019, one of the highlights of the national road racing calendar for the UK's top elite male and female riders.

Outdoor Theatre at Upnor Castle: Nell

Gwynn

24 July 2019

Upnor Castle, Upper Upnor

With the castle as the backdrop, there is no better stage to watch enthralling performances by Changeling Theatre this summer.

NT Live 2018-19: The Lehman Brothers

25 July 2019

Curzon Cinema, Canterbury

The story of a family and a company that changed the world, told in three parts on a single evening.

Outdoor Theatre at Upnor Castle: A Midsummer Night's Dream

2 August 2019

Upnor Castle, Upper Upnor

Multi-award nominated Immersion Theatre are thrilled to present the most magical and romantic comedy of them all, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Rock the Mote 2019

3 August 2019

Mote Park, Maidstone

A new and exciting festival comes to Maidstone's Mote Park on Saturday 3 August 2019, featuring some of the UK's best tribute performances, celebrating artists from both the past and the present. Acts announced thus far are Coldplay, Oasis v Blur, Pink Floyd and Foo Fighters, all performed by some of the best tribute acts the country has seen.

Will Adams Festival

7 September 2019

Gillingham Park

Celebrate the life and legacy of Will Adams – the first-ever Englishman to travel to Japan. From Tudor England and maritime history to Japanese culture in the 17th and the 21st century. Lots to see and do, including Taiko Meantime Drumming, martial arts, living history and storytelling.

NT Live: One Man, Two Guvnors (Recorded)

26 September 2019

Gulbenkian Cinema, Canterbury

Featuring a Tony Award-winning performance from host of the *The Late Late Show*, James Corden, the hilarious West End and Broadway hit *One Man, Two Guvnors* returns to cinemas to mark National Theatre Live's 10th birthday.

Wise Children

3 October 2019

Curzon Cinema, Canterbury

Multi-award-winning director Emma Rice brings her unique vision to Angela Carter's great last novel in this brand-new theatre production, which was filmed for the cinema at York Theatre Royal.

University of Kent

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ENGLISH HERITAGE



THE BEANEY
HOUSE OF ART
& KNOWLEDGE