

Winter 2019/20

University of Kent

the GradPost



Kent Union update

Pilgrim's progress

Teamwork makes the dream work



A newsletter created by postgraduates for postgraduates

Editorial



Hello all, and welcome to the Winter 2019/20 edition of *The GradPost*!

Term one is nearly at an end and everyone is settling back into their routines of studying, research and teaching. We've had an amazing selection of articles submitted for this winter edition, along with a bustling new team of writers joining the current editorial team. We've really enjoyed the wealth of new ideas for articles and features in *The GradPost*, and we hope you enjoy them too.

As well as the KGSA and Union updates, with this edition's piece written by our new VP Postgraduate Experience Laura Carlin, we have a great variety of personal journeys to studying at the University under the title 'Pilgrim's Progress'. We also have a report of the mental health support available on campus and a report about the LGBTQIA+ student experience; both well worth the read.

Don't forget to read Gandalf, the Woolf college resident cat's Q&A column and attempt the quiz at the end of the issue!

If you would like to respond to Rebecca's advice column, or have other submissions for the *The GradPost*, please do not hesitate to email us at: gradpost-submissions@kent.ac.uk

All the best,

The Editors-in-Chief

Megan Batterbee

PhD English

Shelly Lorts

PhD Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Kryisia Waldock

PhD Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Cover image

Christmas lights outside The Registry on the Canterbury campus.

KGSA update

Stepping into winter

Another amazing *GradPost* issue is here, and I'm here again with our regular Postgraduate Community Update. The biggest news of the last few months has to be Postgrad Welcome Week. While we stuck to the same calendar of events we've done for the past several years, we upped our game and got a bit fancier this time.

New partnerships have been forged with venues all over campus, which meant that our annual pub quiz found its way to the Gulbenkian, and way more postgrads found their way there, too. We had so many people show up that we almost had to leave; we hit capacity for the space! But, in true teamwork, community fashion, we all rallied together to great walkways, move chairs, open doors, and settle into the stiff competition. Ten postgrad winners walked away with vouchers for free meals that night.

Also featured during the eight days of festivities were a walk into town for shopping and a Cathedral visit, a casual afternoon tea, more pizza than we've ever ordered for the movie night in the Woolf Lecture Theatre, an on-campus pub crawl (during which we were the largest of five groups participating), an in-town pub crawl (again, we had so many more than we expected that things got a bit crazy), and inductions galore.

We capped the week off with a fancy champagne reception on the rooftop of the Graduate School, and it was amazing to see everyone mingling with the new friends they made during the week.

Of course, no discussion of the beginning of a new academic year would be complete without mentioning our annual Postgraduate Freecycle. The Woolf Common Room was packed with home goods that last year's postgrads donated for the benefits of the incoming cohort. This initiative gets bigger every year, so be sure to look ahead at what you plan to donate are you move out.

Speaking of the Woolf Common Room, this postgrad space is currently undergoing a full and magical transformation. Our goal is to make this a comfortable and function space; once complete, you'll find a full pool table, kitchenette, massive-screen TV, study tables, and over-stuffed sofas. We will also have table games available for those who want to blow off steam with a bit of competition. These games are being made available thanks to the Graduate School's Postgraduate Community Experience Awards; one of last year's winners won funding to provide games and books in the Common Room. We launched this new initiative with a packed party, where postgrads split into groups to play games, drink hot cocoa, and eat cake. So successful was this party that we're planning to it at least once a month going forward.



We've also had our annual Postgrad Halloween bash, but we took it out of the casual setting of the Common Room and into Mungo's, where we had special drinks created for the occasion and a DJ pumping Halloween-themed jams. Congrats to the costume winners of the night, and thanks to the hundreds who came out to celebrate. Next up is our annual Postgrad Thanksgiving Dinner, which has also outgrown the Common Room and our ability to cook it for you ourselves; we'll be hosting a fully catered dinner in Darwin... my tummy is grumbling as I write this. Upcoming in the new year will be even more and even bigger events. We'll also be taking on more wellbeing issues, such as reactivating the accommodation task force that has already made many improvements to Woolf. We're looking ahead to tackling issues for students who teach and funding issues.

The Postgraduate Officers of the KGSA have been around forever; we were created to fill a gap for postgraduates in the University community. We were established to serve as the postgraduate voice and to advocate for postgraduates across all campuses. We also work hard to create community and champion wellbeing within our peer group. We've steadily grown in funding and engagement, but this year has been by far the biggest in many ways in the three years since I was first elected as a Postgrad Officer. It's been an absolute blast to continue to bring this community the support, events, and initiatives it deserves. Remember, we're all full-time students, too. We're in the trenches with you, but we volunteer our time because we love what this work brings to the culture of Kent.

You are always welcome to reach out with any issues, concerns, ideas for events, etc.

Shelly Lorts

President of Kent Postgraduate Officers (KGSA)
PhD student, Medieval and Early Modern Studies
Twitter: @unikentshelly



Kent Union update

Hello postgrads!

My name is Laura and I'm your Vice-President Postgraduate Experience at Kent Union for this current academic year. I have been elected by students like yourselves to represent postgrads across all University of Kent campuses. I represent the postgraduate voice at the highest level of university structures in order to campaign for and effect positive change to the postgraduate experience.

Firstly, a little bit about myself! I studied Clinical Psychology for my undergraduate degree here at Kent before progressing onto an MSc in Neuro/Cognitive Psychology. Getting involved with Kent Union was a huge part of my student experience. Whilst studying for my BSc, I worked at both Woody's and the Library Café. I joined many societies and sat on committees for Raise and Give (RaG), CoppaFeel! and Turing College. During my Masters, I worked in the Student Activities Centre and continued as a member of RaG committee, whilst also joining the Tennis Society as a beginner. I decided to run for the position of VP Postgraduate Experience because I have had many valuable and varied experiences throughout my time at Kent, so I believe I have the appropriate grounding to stand up and support the postgraduate student voice.

One of my key aims this year is to combat the distorted culture that university is only for undergraduates. Ensuring that postgrads feel able to get involved in extracurricular activities is important to me. I am in the process of collecting data, in order to investigate the barriers currently preventing PGs from joining sports and societies. This will form the basis of a set of recommended criteria for society committees to consider when planning events and sessions. Campaigning to guarantee that, like undergraduates, taught postgrad students (PGT) have timetable flexibility for sports, activities, and religious reasons is also a priority for me this year.

Furthermore, postgraduate students often express severe disappointment with the lack of events and activities available to them over the summer period once the undergraduate academic term has come to an end. With this in mind, I want to lobby for the continuation of university services, events and extra-curricular activities during the summer in order for postgraduate students to be effectively supported all year round. Although already in the works, I am excited to work more closely with staff from Kent Sport in order to improve postgrad access to sports and gym classes generally, but especially over the summer period.



This ties in well to another cause close to my heart; postgraduate wellbeing. I am committed to improving mental health and wellbeing services for postgrad students, starting with raising awareness of the current facilities provided by both the University and Kent Union. I will follow this by creating postgrad-specific events and services dedicated to student welfare, such as a PG Buddy Scheme and PG Nightline service. I believe that an essential means to developing postgraduate wellbeing comes in the form of creating and sustaining a strong, supportive, and student-focused postgraduate community, offering postgrads the spaces and opportunities to socialise, collaborate and, most importantly, take time for themselves. One of the events I am proudest of organising this year is the PG Tea Break, which has taken place every Thursday from 2-3pm in the Student Media Centre above the Venue. Postgrads can use this time to help themselves to free refreshments, connect with other postgrads, and take a well-deserved break from studying.

Another of my priorities for this year is addressing the inconsistencies within teaching contracts which, as many of you are aware, is an ongoing issue for PGR (postgraduate research, eg PhD, MRes) students. This is an area within the postgrad experience I'm fighting to resolve, as I know how significantly this can impact PGR students.

If there is a PG issue affecting you, please get in touch as my role allows me to better support students through regular communication, with academic schools and use your feedback to help mould their approach towards student support.

This year, Kent Union has launched a Postgraduate Network in order to bring the postgrad community together to raise awareness of any issues and challenges affecting students and to support campaigns for positive change here at Kent. Postgraduate Network Nights, chaired by Ramzi Ismail, will take place throughout the year, so please come along to share your experiences or any concerns you may have. In the meantime, feel free to email postgraduatenetwork@kent.ac.uk with any questions or feedback.

I'm always keen to hear from and talk to postgrads about their experiences and ideas for improving postgraduate life here at Kent. If you're interested in giving me any feedback in person, I am based in Mandela Building during working hours and have an open door policy. Otherwise, you can also contact me via [@lauracarlin](https://www.facebook.com/lauracarlin) on facebook, and l.j.carlin@kent.ac.uk by email.

Laura Carlin
Vice-President Postgraduate Experience

Pilgrim's progress

“The Oxford English Dictionary defines a pilgrim as ‘a person regarded as journeying through life’ or ‘travelling to a place of particular personal interest’. Given Canterbury’s long history of welcoming pilgrims, and Chaucer’s stories shared on the way to the shrine of Saint Thomas at the Cathedral, we thought as a team we should share our unique journeys to this point in our lives. Our Canterbury Tales, if you will. The journey to postgraduate study is not always straightforward or clear. Some are longer than others, some take more diversions, some are paths that none of us expected. But all should be told; as a testament to the work we put in to get to where we are today.

Look up, next to the campus bank and you will see a staircase. It led to the Staff Club when I was an undergrad here. Its occasional discos were the sum total of my PGR experience outside the library or the lab. It was not for me.

I wanted to work with people and their lives, rather than books and microfiche, so a short, impecunious career in the arts followed. The need to make a living eventually drove me into teaching, but I was happy there until curriculum changes began to squeeze my interests out of the timetable and my energies were sapped into school inspections.

On leaving, I realised that nearly everything I had achieved had been done for someone else. It was time to be selfish. That, and a handy PhD loan, brought me back. Not to a lonely cell in the library, but to people and their lives. I’ve found the right place.”

Yvonne Cullen
PhD Drama

“The tale of my adventures from undergraduate to the wild world of postgrad is one of blood, sweat and tears. At the start of my third year studying BSc Psychology, I was approached by the school about applying for a SeNSS 1+3 scholarship. This was a million miles away from my current plans. I couldn’t afford to fund postgraduate studies alone, and the student loan wouldn’t make the daily commute viable, so my plan instead was to jump straight into teaching.

I decided to apply, with no expectation of being accepted. I found a supervisor, started my research and presented my ideas to a board of lecturers. I was rejected, and rapidly came to terms with the fact that my future would consist of teaching rather than lecturing.

Unbeknownst to myself, Kent Business School had been in contact with the psychology department, looking for potential candidates to take up the 1+3 entrant places. It just so happened that my proposal based around group decision-making was just what they were looking for. I suddenly found myself writing a new proposal in an area I had never studied before on a tight deadline. By some miracle, and thanks to my amazing supervisors, my last minute, stitched together, barely finished proposal was not only shortlisted, but won. I could study my MSc and PhD fully funded, and I am now back on track to achieving the goal that this opportunity initially made me realise, of lecturing at the university.”

Zoe Horsham
MSc Social and Applied Psychology

“My university journey or a really bad rom-com? In 2013, I started my A-Levels and fell in love with studying Psychology. So naturally, in 2015, I took the six-hour car trip up to Durham University (from my home town in Kent) where I was excited to study Applied Psychology, unaware that just four months later I would be making the same trip back (considerably less excited, more facing-an-existential-crisis) after dropping out because I did not enjoy my course. In 2016, I made the considerably shorter 2-hour car trip to Southampton University to study Criminology and Psychology because I still didn’t want to give up on my early love of Psychology. Instead, however, my love for psychology morphed into a love for Criminology and now, here I am, studying Criminology at Master’s level and trying to work out what my next step will be! At 18, I thought I would end up a Psychologist, now at 22, I am hoping to end up a Criminologist and live happily ever after.”

Sophie Wilby
MA Criminology

“I usually think of the pilgrims who have taken this path before as I drive to Canterbury. The roads from London to the Cathedral – now motorways rather than footpaths – still bringing us here, to our seat of learning. My own journey began at the University of Glasgow in the 90s; a history student with no life plans. I just enjoyed the journey. Then I had to ‘go to work’ and I found myself working for a wine company in Oxford. The pull of London moved me to West, then East, and finally North London. Settled for once, I re-trained as a vet nurse

at the turn of the millennium. Then a career of clinical work and education, as well as writing, saw me finding my PhD on Twitter, and in a roundabout way, I met the criteria. For the next stage of my journey, I am a pilgrim of veterinary history here at Kent.”

Jane Davidson
PhD Professionalising Animal Medicine

“I wanted to escape after graduating. I hadn’t set up any internships or graduate schemes, so I went travelling. A TEFL course took me to Austria and Germany; two countries steeped in history which I loved for their vibrant cities and hearty food and drink. Next, I headed to Vietnam, a wild, exciting and sweltering place where I taught science and maths and learned that a gap year can easily become a gap life. I rounded off my adventures in Canada, working in coffee shops and travelling from coast to coast. How did I get to Canterbury? Being from Kent originally and tired of being transient, this is my homecoming. I wanted to learn something practical to develop a career. Thinking on the Computational Physics I had studied before and the ever-increasing importance of technology in the modern world, I realised this was something I could do too. It’s a challenge, but I’m enjoying being a student again.”

Caleb Pike
MSc Computer Science

“My (international) Pilgrim’s Passage.

My ‘pilgrimage’ back to Canterbury began in April at a North London café, where I met my sister and her first baby boy after a particular tiring journey from Hamburg to London. ‘You should get back here [to the UK], you know? I could use some auntie support,’ my sister said while cuddling my nephew. I looked at her. ‘Well, now that you mention it, I’ll be your babysitter starting from September’ I said. ‘WHAT?’ She gushed with a smile on her face. I told her the news: I had been offered a scholarship to study my PhD at Kent. At this point, I must say that Canterbury and I have some history. I first came here in 2014 to work as an assistant lecturer in Spanish; I only left after the 2016 referendum. Politics aside, I can say that Canterbury is the only town I have always wanted to return to, and this comes from an international pilgrim who has lived in five different places over the last eight years. Is this the end of a nomad life? Only Canterbury will tell.”

Inés de la Viña
PhD English Language and Linguistics
EU/Spanish International Student



"I am originally from a small town in Western Germany. I completed my undergraduate degree in politics in the South of my home country. For my master's degree, I wanted to study abroad to gain more international experience and new perspectives on international politics. The United Kingdom has always been my dream study location, thus, I searched all over the country for universities offering an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies. The University of Kent offered not only an excellent joint degree programme, but also an interesting location in close proximity to London and the sea. I applied for a spot on the programme and got my offer quickly. No need to think about the offer for long – UKC it was!"

I arrived in Canterbury on arrivals weekend with two fully-packed suitcases, ready to start this new adventure. Despite only being here for about two months, I have already fallen in love with the old and picturesque

city centre of Canterbury and the surrounding areas of Kent. I have met wonderful people not only through my programme, but through the variety of activities offered on campus. Everyday I gain new experiences both on an academic but also a personal level.

The support for European and international students is extensive, ranging from day trips to networking events to academic support. In the first few months these offers were wonderful opportunities to connect with other European and International students who were in the same situation as me. I would not have wanted to miss out on my trip to Leeds Castle, the great Afternoon Tea event or the 1:1 advice session by SLAS on how to improve my academic writing in the UK. I recommend for every EU and international student to make the most out of your time at Kent and exploit all the opportunities and support it offers to you."

Mariella Biegeler
 MA Peace and Conflict Studies
 EU/German International Student

Advice column

Hello fellow postgrads! I am glad you have found your way to *The GradPost* (and to my advice piece). To introduce myself, my name is Rebecca and I am a PhD student in Psychology here at the university. I will have a recurrent advice section in every issue this year. For this, I hope you will get in touch with any concerns or questions that you would like some help or guidance with. Now, you may be thinking, who is this person and what right does she have to be giving advice? And you are entitled to that opinion, but my aim is to provide simple tips and tricks for getting through postgraduate study. My route here was far from conventional. Being the first in my friends and family to attend university left me searching the internet for simple, straight to the point advice but the results would often be over complicated or not answer the question. This led to me feeling quite alone and sometimes inferior to my peers, and I started to think that I must be the only one having these issues. However, I can now confidently say that is not the case. Every single student will struggle at some point; yes, the triggers may be different, but the outcome is ultimately the same. This is why we need to look out for each other and help when we can. I really hope to hear from some of you soon; until then, keep reading for my introductory advice on how to break the ice (who knew I could rhyme?).

Please send all submissions to:
gradpost-submissions@kent.ac.uk

All the best,
Rebecca

Getting started: it's ok not to be ok

You are embarking on a new course or academic year, you may have just moved, everything seems new and this has left you feeling... well I can assume quite low at times. I have been guilty of putting on a fake smile and hoping it will all improve, but I assure you this is not the best (or quickest) way to feeling better. My advice if you are feeling quite down is to first talk to the people around you. If you have found yourself sitting alone in lectures, then find someone who is also by themselves and start a conversation. People at university are generally friendly and open so you making the first move could be the beginning of a long-lasting friendship. If the thought of this sends shivers down your spine, then get active online, the postgraduate Facebook pages are a great place to start.

If you already have set up friendships, then be honest with those people. When I first started my PhD, I felt completely out of my depth and severely overwhelmed. But upon speaking to those I share an office with, I found that everyone was feeling the same. In fact, we often laugh about how none of us have a real idea what we're doing, but we take each day as it comes together. If you seek more professional advice, then keep reading the section below as we cover all the services offered here at the university. Ultimately in this short piece I just want to say that it's okay not to be okay and there is help out there, so please do not suffer in silence like I did two years ago!

Rebecca Dole
PhD Cognitive Psychology / Neuropsychology



Gandalf's Corner

Dear Gandalf,

The winters can be really hard as a student. I've noticed that it gets dark really early here, and the cold makes it hard to get anything done. I just want to stay in bed where it's warm and cosy. And I'd much rather stream shows than do actual uni work. Do you have any suggestions that will help now that I'm a postgrad and a lot more independent work to do?

Sincerely, Freezing and Unmotivated

Dear Freezing and Unmotivated,

You've just described my life's goals: stay in bed all day where it's warm. Except I'd swap out the streaming part for endless adoration and strokes. Don't underestimate this hibernation time; as you get closer to writing your dissertation – or if you're already a researcher – time to veg out and think are part of the process.

Sometimes, postgrads get caught up on word counts. They think that they need to hit a certain target every day, and that can make your motivation plummet. Instead, think about working times rather than targets. Schedule out a few



hours a day of 'work' time, and sit down at your desk, or in the Postgrad Study Hub in the Senate, or the library, or a cafe in town....wherever feels right. You might get loads done during that time, and you might just stare at the screen. Either way, you stuck to your schedule, and that's a win. Soon, you'll be used to that being productive time and the words will start to flow. Until then, just think about stuff. Think through your arguments and the readings you've done. Be the philosopher and the writing will come more easily.

We all need down time. I'm nocturnal, so I sleep all day anyway. Night is my hunting time, so I love these longer dark periods. I'm the king of the night, and I use the extra hours to look in the windows at Woolf. Watching. Judging. Protecting. I'm productive during those times so that I can enjoy my down time. I work in sprints, not marathons. Try it.

Gandalf the Black and White

House of Woolf, the Second of His Name, Catman, Bestower of Academic Blessings, The Night, Postgraduate King, Fabulous Feline of Blean, The Great Protector, Taker of Naps, and Pigeon-Control Commander

CORRECTION: In the last issue of *The GradPost*, a picture of Gandalf was incorrectly attributed. This photograph should have been attributed to Kiia Huttunen, our former Editor in Chief. We apologise to Kiia for this oversight, and include this picture of Gandalf once again to celebrate Kiia's great photographic skills, and Gandalf's ability to wear anything well, including but not limited to IKEA carrier bags.

The LGBTQ+ Postgraduate Community

In my experience, attitudes to LGBTQ+ students in public universities are generally more liberal than anywhere else in the country. In the last few years, social acceptance towards those of sexual orientations and gender identities other than cisgender or heterosexual has surged dramatically. At university, everyone tends to respect one another despite their differences; no one cares if you're into guys, girls, or both, and if you identify as another gender. There is freedom and solidarity when one is faced with homophobia, biphobia or transphobia. You would think that hate crimes are less common on UK campuses. Unfortunately, such incidents are not as rare as we are led to believe.

According to Stonewall's report (which can be found in the links at the bottom of the page), 69% of LGBTQ+ students hid or disguised their sexuality or gender identity because they were afraid of discrimination. A further 60% of transgender students have been verbally abused by other students. These are shocking figures for a socially progressive country such as the United Kingdom.

As a gay postgraduate student, I am fortunate enough to have not experienced any negative backlash against my sexual orientation. It is, however, incredibly difficult to find other postgraduate students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, asexual or non-binary, especially on my campus – Medway. Am I afraid to be myself on campus? No. I have a fantastic support system from my classmates, family, friends, and especially my boyfriend. However, other people aren't so lucky.

So, how diverse is the postgraduate community at Kent?

I spoke to two other postgraduates to find out their experiences about what it's like to be an LGBTQ+ student at Kent.

"I identify as queer. I was out before I was an undergrad. My experience at Kent has been interesting, but it's taking time to get settled. At my old university, I had a big network of queer friends. I could fully be myself. I'm commuting from home now and that's no longer the case. I haven't experienced any prejudice at Kent so far, but I had an incident or two at another university. For other students, I would say being out isn't a narrative and it isn't necessarily what you have to do. You may feel better or worse from doing it, but it's a personal decision. You don't deserve to be pressured. I would say going to queer events discreetly can be a good way of building a community and supporting yourself."

David Brown
Canterbury campus

"I'm bisexual and I go by she/her. I've always known that I can love everyone, but there weren't any words for it when I was younger. So far, my experience has been accepting for the most part; everyone I have spoken to seems friendly towards



the LGBTQ+ community. I have been told by many people off campus that I can't decide if I'm straight or gay. I think the university does well to stick behind its LGBTQ+ students, except for allowing the Lambeth Conference to be hosted at the University. As I came out during my postgraduate studies, the advice I would give is to confide in someone safe. The postgraduate experience can be lonely; there are many instances where I find myself completely secluded from others. You're not alone. Be strong, be brave, be proud. Be you!"

Kyla Greenhorn
Canterbury campus

More than two-thirds of LGBTQ+ university students across the UK say their universities have policies in place that protect lesbian, gay and bisexual people. However, there is more work needed to be done for transgender equality, as only half of these students say their universities have policies protecting trans people.

Kent is a university that prides itself on its equality, diversity and inclusivity; with its own LGBTQ+ societies on both campuses, an LGBTQ+ Mythbusters programme where LGBTQ+ students have the opportunity to visit secondary schools and tell their experiences to groups of 30 students aged between 16 and 18, as well as peer support groups and its very own LGBTQ+ Staff Network.

Laura Carlin, Kent Union's Vice-President for Postgraduate Experience, issued an official statement:

"Kent Union are dedicated to providing support to all LGBTQ+ students. The Union works to provide safe spaces and support all students. The LGBTQ+ network allows a safe space for students who identify as part of this community, and it allows for discussion around issues they may be facing and campaigns that they may like to work on with the support from the union. The network holds regular meetings: if you would like to get involved, their contact email is lgbtqnetwork@kent.ac.uk. There are also dedicated staff within the union for those who identify as LGBTQ+, who help build

campaigns and events for the community. Previously Kent Union has facilitated transgender only swim sessions at the Kings School and these can be run again. 'This Kent Girl Can' (run by Emily Window, Kent Union's Vice-President Student Engagement) is inclusive for all who want to get involved this year. For more information, or if you want to get involved, you can find out more on our website: www.kentunion.co.uk "

If you are a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender postgraduate student, please don't be afraid to get in touch with someone you can talk to! Whether it be a relative, classmate or a counselor on campus, there will always be support and guidance whenever you need.

Cameron Jull
MA Multimedia Journalism

For LGBTQ+ resources and helplines, visit:

- www.kent.ac.uk/guides/lgbtq
The University of Kent's official guide for LGBTQ+ students
- www.stonewall.org.uk
- www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_universities_report.pdf
the report featured above
- www.samaritans.org
- <https://metrocharity.org.uk>
- www.pinktherapy.com
- <https://pridecanterbury.com>
- www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/lgbtiqplus-mental-health/#.XbGxO-hKiUI

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Lambeth Conference is an Anglican assembly of bishops which is convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury every 10 years. At the time of publication, it is due to be held at the University of Kent's Canterbury campus in 2020. The conference's decision not to invite same-sex spouses of Anglican clergy to the event has garnered criticism.

Mental health support

There's no denying it. Whether this is your first term as a postgrad or your fifth, the autumn/winter term can seem a little dreary. Between the cold, rainy days, dark mornings, and looming deadlines, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, and possibly even isolated.

I have been feeling the strain of this term myself, and felt that I was the only one. Everyone else seemed so full of energy, so busy, so *productive*. It wasn't until I approached my friends and described how I was feeling that I learnt that almost everyone around me was feeling the same. This was a revelation: I wasn't alone, and these challenges didn't mean I wasn't cut out for life as a postgrad at Kent.

Whether you're battling mental health problems like myself, or you are just having a rough time, it's important to be aware of the support that exists around you. Kent has an extensive network of support available for any problem. It can feel a bit daunting to take the first step and ask for help, but here are some of the ways you can reach out should you need support.

Firstly, the Kent Wellbeing team offers free support to all students and holds all information in strict confidence. In the event that you need urgent support, the Wellbeing team offers crisis drop-in sessions every weekday from 2-4pm in Keynes and 2-3pm in the Gillingham building.

For longer term issues, you can book appointments with Wellbeing Advisers who can offer mental health advice and put in adjustments to assist you with your studies. Even if you feel like you are unable to make it to the office, there are Outreach Advisers who can visit you anywhere on campus, including Woolf or Darwin accommodation.

Additionally, students are entitled to five free counselling sessions through the Wellbeing team.

To access any of these services, contact the team through the Student Support and Wellbeing section of the Kent website.

The Wellbeing team also runs events throughout the year to help provide relief from academic stress. You can follow the team (@unikentssw) on Twitter and Facebook for up-to-date information on events taking place on the Canterbury and Medway campuses.

If you need more specific or multidisciplinary support, you can make an appointment with your local GP. For most of you living on campus, this will be the University Medical Centre, but the procedure will be the same for practices off-campus. Talking to your GP gives you the opportunity to receive a formal diagnosis, if relevant and be offered external support. They may recommend that you take medication to elevate your mood and relieve some of your symptoms. However, this is entirely up to you, and you do not have to agree to anything you are not comfortable with. If you're already on medication, or are prescribed medication while at university, the on-campus Cheadles Chemist allows you to collect your prescriptions without having to leave campus.

If you are an international student with a former diagnosis, you will not be asked to complete a new assessment. Simply bring proof of diagnosis to the medical centre reception and they will be able to update your file accordingly.

All of these services can be indispensable, but feelings of isolation and low mood can hit us at anytime, day or night. Luckily at Kent, there is help available outside working hours. The Big White Wall offers 24/7 guided group sessions delivering different forms of therapy. Their website can be accessed using your Kent email ID, and entering the password KENT1. For individual out of hours

support, Canterbury Nightline is a student-run service available by calling 01227 824848. An online instant messaging service is also available from 8pm-8am Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Nightline advisers can listen to any problems that you may be experiencing and can inform you about services that can offer advice. This is entirely confidential and can even be completely anonymous.

If you're feeling isolated, want someone to talk to or just want to make new friends, the Kent Graduate Student Association (KGSA) run activities every month, such as movie nights, parties, game nights and open talk sessions. Find the latest events on Facebook or Instagram. These can be a great opportunity to meet other postgraduates and discuss any issues that you're having. It can be a much-needed reminder that you are not alone in your worries both within and outside of postgraduate studies.

You can also join societies at any time throughout the year if you wish to meet people with similar interests to yourself. Joining a society can be a great way to relax and have fun outside your working life. The Kent Union website offers links to all of the societies available at Kent, with details of their social media, schedules, and email addresses. Many societies also offer pay-per-event schemes, so don't feel obliged to sign up for a membership if you are unsure if it's for you!

We hope that this guide will help make you aware of the support available throughout the year. No matter your problem, the university has extensive support options to make your time at Kent as enjoyable as possible. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Zoe Horsham
MSc Social and Applied Psychology



Teamwork makes the dream work

Who's Who of postgraduate representation

Yvonne Cullen
PhD Drama



Shelly Lorts

**President of Kent Graduate
Student Association**
SL678@kent.ac.uk

Shelly is a full-time PhD student, who was first elected as a Postgraduate Officer of the KGSA during her MA three years ago. This is her second year as the KGSA President. The KGSA has traditionally been the student-led voice and representation for postgraduates at Kent. It has grown to run events, initiatives, and to lobby the University on behalf of the postgrads at Kent. Shelly was one of the Officers involved in the large project of Woolf improvement a couple of years ago, for which the Postgrad Officers commissioned a thorough survey and organised a task force of Deans, Masters, and Accommodation heads. She also sits on the Graduate School Board and liaison groups to ensure that the current student experience is fairly represented.

Laura Carlin

**Students' Union Vice President
(Postgraduate Experience)**
union-postgrad@kent.ac.uk

Laura is a full-time elected sabbatical officer in a new role for the Students' Union that reflects the Union's commitment to postgrads. Laura described her role as fulfilling a need for Union representation for all students as previously, postgrad students had expressed concerns that the Union did not fully represent them. 'My role is here to improve postgraduate representation and ensure that issues such as teaching contracts, accessibility to extra curricular activities and so on, are addressed.'

Nicola Brown

**Students' Union Postgraduate
Experience Co-ordinator**
N.Brown-519@kent.ac.uk

'As Postgraduate Experience Co-ordinator for Kent Union, my job is to support Laura's work and campaigns, and to ensure that postgraduate students are engaged, included, and well represented by the Union. This is a challenge, as the postgraduate experience is particularly broad, including part time students, taught Masters', research students and teachers.'

Ramzi Izmail

Students' Union Postgraduate Network Chair
postgraduatenetwork@kent.ac.uk

Ramzi has been elected to support and create postgrad campaigns. The network also exists to raise awareness of issues and to support the postgrad community and the Postgrad Network Facebook page has information about current campaigns. Ramzi's manifesto is all about reshaping: the reshaping of international students' experiences, of engagement, careers advice and welfare.

Camilla Muller

**Student College Community Life Officer
for Woolf College**
C.Muller-963@kent.ac.uk

'I'm more than happy to help students with any problems they may be experiencing as a member of Woolf College and the postgraduate community; anything from accommodation to well-being and everything in between. My work email is C.Muller-963@kent.ac.uk. Students can contact me about anything regarding their college experience, not necessarily just accommodation issues.'

We have a great community and it will thrive if we all work together.

Creative piece

The Canterbury Bells

Lorna entered the cathedral grounds under the auspices of attending Evensong. She longed to stand below the grand stained-glass windows where angled light would congregate.

I ought to have come straight here when I arrived, she thought.

It got dark so early this time of year. She felt the frost in her lungs and shivered. The icy specter of her breath rose before her, the air full of the ghosts of another dying year. The chanting of Psalms and canticles flowed through the cloisters. She was still being haunted.

Her housemate Jack had spent Christmas alone.

"You could have stayed with us," she had said. "I think I'd feel like a bit of an interloper."

They had banished the gathering gloom together with a fire in the hearth. The old house had felt dismal while he haunted it alone.

I wish I'd stayed here with you, thought Lorna.

It would have been easier, but what was Christmas without a few family arguments? It hadn't been long before Lorna had disappeared from home and dropped in on Jack. Their plan was Big Ben and the fireworks on TV at midnight. There would be drinks, but they weren't eighteen anymore. People arrived and conversation came easily enough, but soon she had to escape. She would return after some fresh air, ready to take on the world.

The cathedral was a beacon against the night. Lorna kept to the dark passageways. She stopped dead below crumbling arches and the thing that followed her stopped too. Shadows took shape, darkness congealed into a familiar form, a grim reflection of herself, with her eyes and hollow features. Lorna steadied herself on a column, the stones cold beneath her hand.

"It has been a while," she said. "Not so long," replied the other. "Yet you follow me still."

"You hold great sadness in your heart, and a wounded soul," it said with Lorna's cold lips.

Lorna was used to being haunted. This terrible vision of herself held a silent vigil in the stillness of night. When it drew closer, she would curl up and close her eyes, hearing the creak of the mattress, feeling the weight on her bed.

"Not tonight," she said.

Their eyes met and Lorna was caught in those steely mirrors. The apparition tempted her towards the cathedral. Lorna followed, frozen grass crunching underfoot. She entered the nave where the vaulted ceiling soared high above. Dead fingers beckoned. Lorna followed through a small archway in the wall. Feeling blindly into darkness, climbing along cold stones, Lorna felt her ghost's wispy hair in every cobweb, imagined those dead fingers in

each misshapen stone she grasped. Moonlight filtered down the narrow stairs as she reached the belfry. The silent bells loomed overhead.

She called out; her words echoed and the bells trembled. The greatest bell, old Dunstan, shimmered in the moonlight. From its depths stepped an aged man with translucent skin the colour of bronze. His cavernous voice resonated in deep tones.

"Watch and listen as the hour ascends!"

The exposed clock whirred and clicked, cogs spinning faster, counting the hours until midnight. For every bell that rang, another spirit appeared, surrounding her, close enough to touch with the spectral caress of cold metal. Lorna clasped her hands over her ears against the cacophony.

"To what do we owe this intrusion?" said Dunstan. "I was led here by the thing that haunts me!" said Lorna. "Indeed! Look below you!"

She crept to the edge and peered down through an open trapdoor. On the floor below lay her broken form! Her doppelgänger? Or were they one and the same?

"It appears you were led here for a reason," said Dunstan. "What have you done to me?" "Nothing more than reflect your torment. Your sorrow has brought you here. Behold!"

On a high bridge above a raging river, Lorna saw a woman with a baby in her arms. Hypnotised by the churning waters, she ceased to see the world around her.

"She's not going to jump?"

Lorna reached for the woman's dress, but her fingers wound around nothing. She shouted. The woman stared through Lorna, but perhaps heard a whisper on the wind across the years. She stepped back from the edge.

"Your ancestor, on a winter's night," said Dunstan. "You have her to thank for your existence, just as she now has you to thank for hers."

Lorna saw a hill outside a crumbling city where the air was harsh and dry. A small girl gripped a chain-link fence, gazing out across the dusty landscape. Beyond the horizon lay home. A young man climbed the hill behind her and the girl buried her face in his clothes, seeking comfort. They faded into black mist where ghosts pressed in, muttering in sonorous tones.

"You are trapped between the cruelty you see in the world, and the cruelty you find in yourself," they said. "You cannot suffer enough to take away all the suffering of the world. You prey only upon yourself." "Surely that is the natural reaction to the world?" said Lorna.

"The world has always been both good and evil, and always will be. By dwelling on evil, you help hold it in place. You blame others for not giving you what you deserve or taking more than they deserve, and so you too become cruel."

"I would stop if I could!"

"Concentrate on what you can control. You have the power to participate in life. Think on that or else be dragged down. There is good in the world. Look for it. You can make a difference."

"I don't know if I can."

"All you can do," said the bells, "is to do what you can."

The spirits retreated and the bells rang nine times.

Only nine o'clock, she thought. *Not midnight! It's not too late!*

She hurtled down the staircase and crashed into someone coming up. The man she had seen in her vision. Despite his weather-beaten face, he wasn't much older than Lorna.

"I saw you go in here," he said. "I didn't want you to get locked inside."

The small girl waited outside.

"Is she your sister?" asked Lorna.

"My niece," he said. "You are a student here?" Lorna nodded. "I studied in Canterbury," he said. "Not so long ago, but it feels that way." "Come and spend the New Year with me," she said.

If I can do one small thing tonight, she thought, *perhaps the year won't have been a waste.*

The streets were filling up with wassailing revellers as Lorna led them back to the old house.

"I hope you still have that fire going, Jack! It's freezing."

Food and drink were soon passed around and the newcomers shared in the celebration. Big Ben chimed in London and the cathedral chimed in Canterbury. On the first frosty morning of the New Year, Lorna awoke to a call from her father.

"Happy New Year, pet," he said. "I'm sorry about Christmas. We miss you while you're away."

"I miss you too, dad," she said, "but it was too much."

"I know. I need to step back a little. I'm still working out how."

"All you can do," said Lorna, "is all you can do." "Aye, that I will."

It was a New Year of new possibilities. The first thing would be to talk more with her friends and family. She would always want things she couldn't have and think about things she couldn't change, but it was a start. Across the city, the bells rang in the New Year's morning in polite disagreement.

Caleb Pike

MSc Computer Science

Canterbury quiz



1 Who was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral?

- a The Pope
- b Henry VII
- c Thomas Becket

2 Which famous musician attended the University of Kent?

- a Ellie Goulding
- b Brian May
- c Adele

3 Which celebrity baker lives in Kent?

- a The Muffin Man (who lives in Drury Lane)
- b Mary Berry
- c Paul Hollywood

4 What is the name of the bus service between Canterbury and Medway campuses?

- a The Queens Ship
- b The Kings Ferry
- c The Princes Boat

5 In metres, how much farther East is Canterbury East train station than Canterbury West train station?

- a 103m
- b 67m
- c 20m

6 Which exotic animal remains can be found on the banks of the Great Stour in Canterbury?

- a Cheetah
- b Elephant
- c Gorilla

7 What is the name of the extension of the Darwin building?

- a The Missing Link
- b Natural Selection
- c Evolution

8 Which of these is NOT one of the Canterbury Tales?

- a The Miller's Tale
- b The Lord's Tale
- c The Cook's Tale

Postgraduate events

Kent Graduate Student Association (KGSA)

Regular events

Weekly office hours: Each Thursday, feel free to drop in or book a time to meet with KGSA President, Shelly. Whether you just want a chat, or you have questions/concerns about your postgraduate experience at Kent, this is a private environment. And there's tea.

Bi-weekly Postgrad Game Night: Come along twice a month in the newly refurbished Woolf Common Room for hot cocoa, games, and social time.

Monthly Movie Nights: We're taking advantage of the new comfy sofas and massive TV in the new Common Room. There may also be snacks, and you can help pick the film.

For your diaries

January (date tbc)

Postgraduate Winter Ball for charity: We're trying something new this year and partnering with a power-house postgrad from our community who is doing big things. Details to come.

14 February

Annual Postgrad 'Pal-entine's Day' Pizza and Movie Night: Join the rest of the lonely singles in the postgrad community who want to stuff their faces with pizza celebrate being unattached. (It's okay to cry and snuggle with your favourite pillow... we still love you).

13 March

Wine and Whine Night: Let's drink stuff and complain. We can forge bonds through our shared stress and hatred. Plus, blowing off steam is good for mental health.

Kent Union

Regular events

Kent Union's PG Tea Break offers all postgraduate students the chance to take some time out of their day to enjoy free refreshments and get to know other postgrads in a designated social space. The Tea Break will be running next term with dates and times to be confirmed.

One-off events

13-17 January

Kent Union's Postgraduate Welcome Back Week: A week's worth of events for both PGT and PGR students including free gym sessions, academic workshops and various social activities, some of which will also be extended to Medway.



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