Celebrating 100 years of higher education in Portsmouth

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Autumn 2008

Welcome back for the new university year. I hope that you have had an opportunity to relax and somehow avoided all the rain. Of course, contrary to popular myth, we do not break up in June and return in October. There has been lots of hard work during the summer continuing with year-round activities, preparing for the new teaching year and recruiting students.

The gloomy economic conditions might affect the numbers of students who want to come to university: more will be challenged by the costs if recession bites, but, on the other hand, there may be fewer opportunities to take jobs at eighteen, so that university seems more attractive.

On campus, King Henry has had a major makeover and we should gain access to the Deni Sciama Building – and its new catering facility – around Christmas. Work will start on the extension to the William Beatty Dentistry Building to accommodate a major new partnership with the King’s College London Dental Institute, as well as increased access to NHS dentistry for local people. Other capital developments are being considered but are further back in the planning stage. Our market research tells us that one of the main factors in our successful recruitment is the high quality of our facilities and so it is very important that we continue to replace or refurbish the less good parts.

So a lot is happening and I am confident that, with your help and commitment, we shall meet successfully challenges as they arise.

John Craven
Vice-Chancellor

First word

Welcome to issue 23 of Communicator. This issue reflects the fact that indeed we do not have a long rest in the summer and rather that we have all been very busy. There’s a lot in this issue about the creativity and entrepreneurship of our students with three stories on film-making/scriptwriting (p. 6 and p. 10) and an article on an amazing scrap wind turbine.

You will notice that John Craven, Vice-Chancellor has written a First Word for this issue; the Last Word has been given to Wendy Powell who wished to respond to the Last Word from Claire Brookes who wished to respond to the Last Word from John Craven.

Max Robson’s turbine could help to improve the lives of those in developing countries and there’s also much the University is doing in its own community to improve the intellectual/cultural life and health care of the city and local area. Both the Department of Mathematics’ Maths and Art Festival and CCI’s Eldon Gallery and Space exhibitions are open to the public whilst the School of Health Science and Social Work recently graduated 13 paramedics who will work in the local ambulance services.

The up-coming content deadline and publication dates are:

Issue
Submission deadline
Christmas 2009
Wednesday 29 October
Easter 2009
Friday 13 February
Graduation 2009
Friday 22 May

Distributed
Monday 8 December
Monday 30 March
Monday 6 July

Editorial

We are some weeks from having definitive numbers of students registered with us, but all the signs are that our UCAS and international recruitment figures are very strong. I am very grateful for all the work that has led to this outcome and for all that will be done to help our students to settle in and be successful in their courses. We are currently engaged in some rather technical discussions with the Funding Council on how to determine whether a student has completed a year’s study, and the additional students that we have recruited provide a cushion in terms of meeting our target if it turns out that we can count fewer student completions than we hope.

Several other important events will happen in the year ahead. We shall get the results of the RAE in December and know the funding implications for 2009 in March. At the same time we are a part of the pilot for the proposed new research assessment methodology, which is also presenting some challenges.

In October we shall learn the inflation figure which determines the first stage of the three-year pay deal negotiated in 2006. The inflation rate is, of course, higher than it was a year or so ago and so all universities will have to think about the implications of the pay increase on their finances for this year and their budgets for future years.

The upcoming content deadline and publication dates are:
Google donates cash to Zoo project
One of the foremost examples of ‘Citizen Science’ is receiving a cash injection from search engine giant, Google, which has awarded a grant worth £50,000 to Professor Bob Nichol of the Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation to develop the Galaxy Zoo project.

Galaxy Zoo involves the public in real scientific research by asking them to submit astronomical data to help researchers find out more about the origins of the universe. It was the brainchild of Chris Linkott, presenter of the BBC’s Sky at Night.

The grant will enable the launch of Galaxy Zoo 2, the second phase of the project, which will be asking the public to classify galaxies in finer detail.

Professor Nichol has been leading the project with which the University of Portsmouth has been heavily involved. He said: 'The Google grant will enable us to add two key features to Galaxy Zoo. We will incorporate Google Sky technology into the website so it resembles the Google Maps interface. Then we will put Galaxy Zoo into the Google Sky interface, which will allow people to zoom around the universe, click on any galaxy and classify it more easily.'

The astronomer Edwin Hubble was the first astronomer to divide the ‘galactic zoo’ into two major categories early last century. He called the galaxies shaped like rugby balls ‘ellipticals’ and those shaped like a whirlpool he called ‘spirals’. More than 80 years later there is still major controversy among scientists about how these two principal galaxy types evolved.

Cosmologists at Galaxy Zoo are already planning Zoo 3 with new data from the PanSTARRS survey which begins later this year. They will carry out a systematic census to identify ‘bars’ and ‘rings’.

Emerald Award
HRMM lecturers Sarah Gilmore and Steve Williams have been given an Emerald Literati Network Award for Excellence for their paper entitled ‘Towards the professional: a critical analysis of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s professional qualification scheme’, published in Personnel Review.

Every year Emerald invites each journal’s editorial team to nominate what they believe has been the best paper during the year. The award-winning papers are chosen following consultation amongst the journal’s editorial team, many of whom are eminent academics or managers.

Paper presentation
Michael Asters, Alan Collins, Department of Electronics and Dylan Jones, Department of Mathematics, presented their paper: ‘Container комплексный в Port Congestion and Competition’ at the Third International Conference on Funding Transport Infrastructure. This was held in Paris in June 2008. The paper offered a framework for analysing the effects of congestion due to traffic variations, trans-shipment premiums and technological changes.

Tonguefreed
The tonguefreed, the project’s new yearly publication, which contains the features to Galaxy Zoo. We will incorporate Google Sky technology into the website so it resembles the Google Maps interface. Then we will put Galaxy Zoo into the Google Sky interface, which will allow people to zoom around the universe, click on any galaxy and classify it more easily.'

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Innocence Project
Miscarriages of justice are all too frequent in the criminal justice system. Reductions in criminal legal aid make it difficult for all but the committed and well-financed law firms to investigate possible miscarriages, particularly as investigations are not publicly funded. University-based innocence projects allow university students to do the investigations into miscarriages of justice which otherwise might not happen and can lead eventually to the freeing of a wrongfully convicted individual.

The University of Portsmouth’s Innocence Project will become the eighteenth such projects in the UK and will start operating in October 2008. Twelve law students will receive training from the Innocent Network UK at a national training weekend in Cardiff and then under the supervision of a member of staff (Dr Damian Carney) and a firm of outside solicitors (Saulit & Ashworth), they will be reviewing case files, interviewing witnesses and checking scientific evidence to see whether there are any grounds of appeal. If there are, then the solicitor firm will take over the case and prepare a case file for the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Remote-controlled ‘man’ trains healthcare professionals
A wireless, portable mannequin which can be remote-controlled to talk, sweat, bleed, vomit and have a heart attack is helping put the University of Portsmouth at the forefront of clinical simulation and training in Europe. The mannequin, named Istan, is the most advanced patient simulator on the market and the world’s first wireless patient simulator.

The University is first in England to have such cutting-edge technology at its fingertips. The Istan costs £40,000 and will give students a large dose of reality while they are learning. It will be used to train healthcare professionals along with five other simulators ‘living’ and ‘dying’ at the University’s ExPERT Centre.

The Istan was designed from the inside out so its anatomical structure closely mimics a human skeleton. His spine, neck, arms and legs have mimic the movement of a real person. He can be male or female, young or old and can be healthy one day and dying the next. He can cry and blink, his pupils can dilate and contract, his blood pressure can fall, internal organs bleed, bowels make realistic sounds and lungs collapse.

In addition, the suppliers have an online 32-page recipe book for lecturers to create realistic vomit, urine with infection, blood clots, pus, the fruity breath of someone with a specific diabetic condition and a host of other bodily fluids and conditions.

The Istan will be joining the University’s family of simulators in the ExPERT Centre’s hospital ward and operating theatre to help students practice and gain confidence in their professional skills.

Specialist appointed as representative member of AUA Council
Hetal Maniar, a Project Implementation Specialist in the Faculty of CCI, has become the first person from the University to be elected as a representative of the newly-introduced council of the Association of University Administrators (AUA), a post which will run for a period of three years.

The AUA has 4,000 members internationally and is an inclusive membership-led professional body for those interested in advancing their career in education. Hetal has been a member since 2004 and the Board of Trustees and Council were formed this year to represent the AUA at the highest level. Their terms of reference include presenting the achievements of the Association to the members and ensuring completed equality.

Hetal has presented two of her papers: Middle management – heaven and hell and Postgraduate courses – are worthwhile doing? which culminated with invitations to present these papers at the AUA in Belfast and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) in Phoenix, Arizona. The next subject she will be researching is The changing face of student recruitment in India.

Hetal said: ‘I am confident I will bring diverse knowledge and fresh ideas to the council. If anyone would like any advice or information, please get in touch.’

If you would like to know more about the AUA go to www.aua.ac.uk/about or contact Hetal on extension 5190 or email hetal.maniar@port.ac.uk
Take a break with a healthy walk

Are you interested in improving your productivity at work, your health and your social life all at the same time? Then why not join up with Portsmouth Healthy Walks on a Tuesday lunchtime! A free led walk to the seafront or Gunwharf? The walk leaves from the main entrance of the Civic Offices, Guildhall Square at 12.15pm every Tuesday and alternates between Old Portsmouth and Southsea. If the lunchtime walk doesn’t fit with your day, how about the early bird walk at 7am from the Pyramids, also every Tuesday? Perhaps you would prefer the Sunday walk at the Milton Forest to meet the Woodland Companion on the second and last Sunday of each month at 3pm in the summer and 2.30pm when the clocks have gone back.

Walking is a great physical activity: it’s free, can reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke, lower cholesterol and relieve anxiety and stress. What other reasons do you need? Come along and try a healthy walk, there’s a three-day scriptwriting workshop themed on the centenary celebration of the University’s Park Building.

Creative scriptwriters celebrate Park Centenary

Imaginative young people from the University of Portsmouth’s UP for It scheme used ghosts and thieves to bring history to life at a three-day scriptwriting workshop themed on the centenary celebration of the University’s Park Building.

At the start of the workshop, a curator from City Museum talked to the students about the history of the building and musicians from the University staff dressed up in costumes from the past 100 years to help inspire the scriptwriters. The 11 to 16-year-olds worked in small groups to produce a seven-minute script which they performed on the last day to parents and marketing staff.

One team led by Robin Mukherjee, a writer who has worked on The Bill, Casualty and EastEnders, produced a comedy drama about G E Smith, the architect of Park who allegedly haunts the building in the guise of a friendly caretaker. Craig Blatty, Senior Lecturer from the School of Creative Arts, Film and Media, helped his team to produce a comedy about a ‘mad’ Professor whose prestigious reputation comes into disrepute when a valuable portrait of G E Smith is mysteriously stolen.

He said: “This workshop has been about inspiration, experimentation, application and demonstration. The final scripts were excellent. We were quite astounded as the youngest student was only 11. Each participant behaved professionally and was focused throughout. I can honestly say each one of them gave 150 per cent.”

UP for It is the University’s free offers scheme which aims to inform 11 to 16-year-olds about further and higher education in a fun and informative way.

Visit to identify new livelihood opportunities

Andy Thorpe from the Department of Economics recently returned from Aral in Kazakhstan where he was working on a Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) project entitled ‘Identifying New Opportunities for Effective Livelihood-Supporting Policy Interventions in the Inland Fisheries of Central Asia’.

Aral was, historically, the main port on the Aral Sea, but following the Soviet decision to redirect much of the river flow into the Aral Sea it was re-energised. The sea not only shrunk by 70 per cent and separated into two, but also turned increasingly saline. As the waters dropped, Aralak found itself over 40 km from the shoreline and the wide, circularly-shaped arid areas of the Aral ships graveyard (below) began to circulate.

Moreover, as the sea turned saline, the indigenous freshwater species died out. Soviet planners responded by introducing sea water species, although only the flounder thrived. Unfortunately local fishermen did not have the techniques to catch the flounder and fisher livelihoods foundered. Recovery of the fishery started when an internationally-renowned Danish fisherman, Kurt Christensen, taught the local fishermen how to catch flounders in the mid-1990s. More recently, a World Bank-funded project has helped the North Aral Sea begin to grow in size and, as salinity levels have been reduced, species are returning.

Andy’s visit to identify new livelihood opportunities coincided with the visit of the President of the World Bank, Bob Zoellick, who announced a further bank-funded initiative intended to further restore the Aral Sea. As part of the FAO project, Andy is expected to visit the community fisheries of Kyrgyzstan and the collective fisheries of Tajikistan in the coming academic year.

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University news

Karen Jobson

New University Chaplain (Free Church)

Karen Jobson will join the Chaplaincy in September 2008. Karen has been a Methodist Minister serving congregations in Stockton-on-Tees for the past four years. Prior to becoming a Minister, she was a secondary school teacher at a large school in Milton Keynes where she also completed youth counselling training and she went on from there to work for VSO in Namibia. She has a degree in Psychology and Sociology from Liverpool University, a degree in Theology and an MPhil in Missiology from Birmingham University. As part of her theological training she also completed the graduate course in ecumenics with the World Council of Churches in Geneva. She currently sits on World Methodist Council and has a strong interest in the World Church. Research interests include ecumenism, political theology and spirituality. She enjoys travel, writing, cinema and theatre.

Reconcile coffee grounds

The University of Portsmouth Catering Service strives to reduce its carbon footprint. They have now introduced a scheme to reconcile their coffee grounds by bagging them up and encouraging customers and staff to take the grounds and use them as a nutritional additive to their soil. You can apply the grounds as a side dressing to nitrogen-loving plants including most perennials and allium plants and then balance your soil with leaves or dried grass.

In return, the customer or staff member should make a donation to One charity. These donations will help to build unique PlayPumps™ in Africa. As kids spin on the roundabout, water is pumped out of the ground, providing clean water to people who desperately need it.

Check out our environmental page: www.port.ac.uk/catering
Staff communication

A recent review of staff communication highlighted a few facts, some obvious and some not so. Firstly, Communicator is widely read and well-received by staff. The majority opinion is in favour of keeping the printed format over a web-based edition as print is more easily browsed during a spare few minutes or a coffee break.

The other important issues for staff from the audit are that finding information online is critical and ‘all-staff’ emails need a review. As a result of staff opinions, some improvements have been made to our communication methods, with further review and activities planned over the coming months.

Staff Essentials

The new Staff Essentials website was launched as a beta version over the summer to test the site with staff and gather opinions. The final site is now ready for the start of this academic year and will be the default homepage for all staff PCs.

This new site is designed to provide regular news and events for staff to check at their leisure, plus links to all the useful information you might need. You can read learning and teaching events and staff development opportunities from the homepage, plus read the feeds of our external news from the main University website.

The Document Warehouse is a key area for staff and is widely used for University policies and guidelines. Documents are being sorted into more obvious and user-friendly categories which it is hoped will address the difficulties staff may have in finding important information.

The Noticeboard is a new feature and is an informal collection of interesting things such as items for sale, items wanted and houses to rent. There is also a ‘recommended’ section where staff can post details of a local business they have been particularly happy with, plus the lowest offers of staff discounts from local shops and services. There is also a new section where you can advertise a social group or club, a local event taking place or any volunteering opportunities you think staff might be interested in. If you have something to post, just fill in the online form.

All-staff email

Love them or hate them, all-staff emails can contain essential information and are a timely method of communicating with the majority of staff. In providing regular news and events on Staff Essentials, the aim is to reduce the more routine information contained within the all-staff bulletin on a Friday, as staff become more familiar with reading this type of information online. This will reduce the amount of all-staff emails to just the important and timely information which needs to be more directly communicated to staff.

Staff Essentials

The above communication channels assume staff have access to a PC, which is not the case for all. The new Staff Communication Policy outlines the responsibilities of managers and supervisors of non-PC-based staff in communicating relevant information to their teams in a timely fashion. To assist managers and supervisors, all Staff Essentials web pages are formatted to print as a headed notice, to be prominently displayed on a noticeboard. The content of all-staff emails will also be kept to a printable minimum wherever possible.

The above activities are the first steps in improving channels of communication with staff, however should you have any questions or suggestions please contact staffessentials@port.ac.uk

www.port.ac.uk/staffessentials

Non PC-based staff

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www.port.ac.uk/staffessentials

Student communication

In a recent audit of student communication, the two main issues for students related to use of email and the number of places they have to go to find all the information they require. As students do not traditionally check their University email accounts regularly, we have begun to use their personal email addresses. However, this is unreliable when students change their addresses frequently and could also have wider implications for the protection of students’ personal data.

In response to both staff and student concerns, we have rationalised our communication channels to provide some primary and secondary sources. The aim is to reduce the confusion and time spent in communicating inefficiently by clearly outlining to both staff and students which are the channels for critical information and which are supporting channels with information of interest.

The Student Communication Policy provides more detail. Visit www.port.ac.uk/communicatingwithstudents for more information, but here is an outline of the main activities this year.

StartUP

New undergraduate students have received the popular StartUP packs prior to arrival for the last few years. The packs contain useful information on what to do before they arrive and where to go during the first few days.

Pack Design

Packs were tailored for our postgraduate and international students and a group of distance learners received packs as part of a pilot project. As always we will review the success of the packs and move next year towards incorporating more of our students in the process.

LookUP

The revamped LookUP website has just been launched. As one of the two primary channels, the site provides more accessible information for our current students and links to all the popular resources they will need, such as Victory, student portal, library and Set UP for Life. There are also links to all the student support services, plus space for each academic department to use for their own students should they wish.

Students can now access their student email accounts, making it easier and quicker to view the important information that staff so diligently send them.

The news and events section is updated regularly, but it is only as good as the information we receive, so please pass on what’s going on in your area that will interest students by emailing lookup@port.ac.uk

Students will be encouraged, via a campaign across the campus, to check their student email account regularly. As the second primary channel, this will be the only way we email students from now on.

ISL have developed a system for staff to email students simply and quickly and in line with data protection legislation. Part of the staff portal, the new system allows staff to select individuals or groups of students by course or unit and generate an email. This new system provides a less time-consuming method of emailing students safely and via an effective primary channel.

Networked digital signage

A pilot project is underway to network plasma screens in various buildings across the campus. The project currently includes screens in Richmond, Spinnaker, Eldon and King Henry buildings, plus University House and Purple Door.

The screens will be jointly managed by Internal Communications for global messages to all students and by the local departments for their more specific information. The web-based management system provides a simple way of instantly displaying information on one or more screens and can also display critical information on an ad hoc basis during a serious incident.

We hope to test the system over the coming months and look at wider usage in due course. If you would like to express interest in joining a wider project at a later date please email lookup@port.ac.uk to discuss your requirements.

Continual review

Improving student communication is an ongoing activity as students embrace new technology and develop more sophisticated needs. We aim to continually review requirements through consultation with a variety of student groups. A student opinion panel is planned for the next year, gathering together willing participants from a range of courses and years, including campus-based and distance learners.

We will also draw together a network of like-minded staff members who are interested in developing student communication and can advise on best practice and share experiences. Visit the pages at www.port.ac.uk/communicatingwithstudents to keep up-to-date with new ideas, or email lookup@port.ac.uk if you have any comments.
New paramedics hit the streets

The first cohort of paramedics to be trained at the University of Portsmouth graduated in July and are already seeing active service as paramedics in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

The graduating group of 13 have completed the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science. The course was specially adapted to meet the local needs of ambulance trusts in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight by including practical education, clinical practice, and paramedic science. The graduates belong to the South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SCAS) and their success is the culmination of three years of hard work and dedication.

Graduate Karen Skillicom-Aston said: ‘I was thrilled to secure a place on the new Foundation degree in Paramedic Science. It was a rare opportunity to be part of something right from the start and to shape the course for future students. I now feel excited and ready to use my paramedic skills and look forward to a long career in the ambulance service.’

The students’ time was divided between studies at the University, on the road with SCAS and in a variety of clinical placements in local NHS Trusts. The University expects a further 18 students to qualify later this year.

Triumph for pharmacy technician

An MSc in Combined Studies has been awarded to Fiona Eccleston, Chief Technician/Operational Manager at St. Mary’s Hospital, Isle of Wight, making her the first from this group of professionals to achieve this academic award.

Fiona graduated in the first cohort of the Foundation degree in Medicines Management at Portsmouth, for which a Partnership Programme BSc/MSc in Combined Studies is offered as a progression route. Both programmes are work-based, which enabled Fiona to continue with her role at St. Mary’s while undertaking these courses.

As part of her MSc she carried out a project looking at the management of medical gases which has led to improvements in working practices within her hospital and raised awareness of issues that need further investigation. Fiona believes the management of medical gases is key to ensure safety and efficiency within hospitals and a demanding area within medicines management.

Film-making graduate lands Avid job

An international digital solutions company was so impressed by a Portsmouth film-making student’s documentary, that they offered them a freelance contract and the chance to go on tour around Europe demonstrating their editing equipment.

Avid Technology Inc. (who produce the most used editing software), saw Tom Di Forzo’s ten-minute film to celebrate the end of the African slave trade when he entered it into an editing competition at the end of his studies. The film was screening to a private audience on campus and has been requested for historical archive purposes.

Tom graduated from the BSc (Hons) Video and Broadcasting in July and started working for Avid in August. He will take part in the educational tour in various European cities from October.

Park centenary display

As you may well know, 2008 marks the centenary of higher education in Portsmouth. Various events are taking place throughout the year at the University to celebrate this. Park Building itself is at the hub of the activity as the building was opened in 1908 as a base for this learning and teaching. The display outside Park (pictured on the front cover) consists of boards that walk you through the last 100 years of education in Portsmouth. The design is innovative and eye-catching and a great way to inform people of how higher education has evolved over the past century.

Hitting the headlines

The role of the Press and PR team

The media is a demanding beast. Characterised by deadlines and competition, it requires fresh news daily. Journalists want information fast. They want it delivered in a format they will understand, they want access to academics to give their stories credibility, but most of all, they want it now.

All of this can seem a world away from the lives of many academics and other University staff. But engaging with the media, strongly and positively, carries huge benefits.

To the University as a whole, successful media relations relates directly to our reputation and profile – increasingly important in a very competitive sector. It does the same at faculty and department level, following on to an individual level, exposing our strengths and achievements to huge numbers of viewers, readers and listeners. Additionally it promotes national agendas such as Widening Participation and the communication of science, technology, engineering and maths.

The role of the University’s Press Office is to provide a communications channel between the University and the media, a bridge between the two, offering support to both to gain the best result for the institution.

Of the many facets making up a university’s reputation, a great deal rests on the work of its academic staff. Their research, teaching successes, projects within industry, expertise, knowledge and their awards and achievements can raise the university’s profile if communicated in the right way.

The press office have solid experience, much of it gained in the national press. They write and pitch news and feature stories to journalists, in the knowledge that many of these stories will be reused, and know where and when to place them.

We appreciate that condensing a 10,000-word piece into a 400-word news release is an anathema to some academics, but when you consider news desks receive thousands of news releases daily, then providing them with strong, tight copy, written in ordinary English, becomes very important.

Equally important is the ability to respond quickly – often within minutes – to a request for an expert on a given subject. Speed is vital if it’s a national or international news story where the deadlines are tight and the competition fierce. Failure to provide an expert can mean another institution will be quoted worldwide.

Our job is very much to act as a filter; to advise, guide and support staff when dealing with the media. We will draft and agree the news release or news strategy with you, define the rules of engagement with the press, arrange media training, take the press calls and fend off journalists if necessary.

The Press Office is happy to talk to departments, schools and individuals about how best to use its skills and services. Please feel free to contact us.

What the Public wants

• Tight, relevant news releases
• Instant access to experts
• Fast call-back
• Press Office to be a conduit, not a dam

Case study: Dr-David Brown, Institute of Industrial Research (IRI)

The IR, which specialises in research for industry, has received overwhelming press attention in the past year as a result of Press Office collaboration. Some of the University’s biggest media stories of the last 12 months have included IR projects such as using artificial intelligence for car wheels and CCTV, a satellite navigation system for predicting traffic jams and work on a robotic hand.

‘Positive media coverage identifies the University with active, interesting and applied research which is attractive to prospective students,’ said Dr Brown. ‘On a trip to Malaysia, many engineering students knew of our robotics work thanks to stories in the media. It reflects well on our research reputation and the IR has never had so many enquiries.’

Contact the Press and PR team

Annette Ford, Management Assistant ext 3742
Kate Daniell, Senior Press Officer ext 3743
Lisa Egan, Press Officer ext 3748
Sophie Bilyard, Press Officer ext 5350
Maricar Jagger, Events Officer ext 3757
Lucy Higgins, PR Administrator ext 3758
Africans in England need more HIV prevention services

A large-scale survey among Africans in England shows that targeted HIV prevention services are required to improve people’s confidence and skills in avoiding HIV infection. Research and Knowledge Transfer Services (RKTS) has been awarded Proof of Concept funding from RKTS and has received support from the Faculty of CIIT to run the pilot project. The survey findings provide public health planners with clear information about where spending should be prioritised, according to the report authors. While the vast majority of participants in the survey had a clear understanding of how HIV is transmitted, one-in-five had no idea that effective treatment for HIV exists and more than a third didn’t know these treatments work, even if they were taking them. Such gaps in awareness are likely to have a ‘profound effect’ on the chances of Africans seeking HIV-related services in the UK.

About half a million Africans live in the UK, according to the 2001 Census and the Health Protection Agency estimates about 25,000 people are infected with HIV whether they know it or not. The report argues that one of the priorities should be to tackle the lack of confidence felt by those who believe that HIV transmission is out of their hands. More than a third of a people who had no reason to think they had HIV said they were not in control of not getting or not becoming infected. Among people with diagnosed HIV infection, one quarter said they lacked the ability to make sure that they did not pass it on to their sexual partners.

Research and Knowledge Transfer Services (RKTS) has been working with the Media Production team to create innovative teaching artefacts to support those wishing to work as an Expert Witness. One of these artefacts consists of a series of videoed question and answer sessions with a professional expert witness, a barrister and two practising experts. These professionals have given their tips on such issues as:

- how to prepare your report
- how best to deliver evidence under cross examination in court
- how to get started as an expert witness
- legal liabilities experts might face

Another artefact provides a court simulation of an expert giving evidence and demonstrates the challenges experts may face. Both evidence in chief and cross examination are shown and the differences highlighted. Two members of our law staff who were formerly practising barristers, Charles Barker and Charles Mason, were given a starring role in these productions and were able to use their professional skills to reflect on the challenges that experts might face.

These artefacts together with others which include podcasts, narrated powerpoints and a report writing tool have been developed with the guidance of a local university. If anyone is interested in viewing those incorporating them into their teaching materials please contact caroline.stevers@port.ac.uk.

First local GRAcad school held

The University’s first local GRAcad school, held in July in Bournemouth, was attended by thirty-nine postgraduate research degree students, all committed to improving the care and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS. Local GRAcad schools are designed for second or third year (or part-time equivalent) doctoral students to assess and develop their personal effectiveness, networking, team-working, communication and career management skills.

Each course has a team of tutors who come from a wide range of backgrounds and are all experienced facilitators. They support participants throughout the course and in groups help them to reflect on their learning and apply it to their personal situations. A focus on research excellence does not mean that only a minority of students are involved. On the contrary, according to Roy, ‘research is a core activity for every academic at Portsmouth. Not all of us will be active in producing new research, but we all need to be active in scholarship – keeping up with the results of research and using this to develop our teaching. All these activities together are building the foundation of research that is critical to Portsmouth’s future success.’

New Director of Research

Professor Roy Maartens has been appointed as Director of Research from 1 August 2008. He will work with Pro Vice-Chancellor David Arell and the Associate Deans (Research) to promote research at Portsmouth. This is a 40 per cent post and Roy will also stay on as Director of the Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation.

In many ways, research has been and will continue to be the key to our success as a University,’ Roy said. ‘It underpins our teaching and curriculum development, strengthens our links with the community and industry, it connects us into national and international networks and it brings prestige and competitive advantage to a University that is aiming to punch above its weight.’

‘Portsmouth has world-class research – for example, in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), we received grade 5 scores for our research in biomedical and biomolecular sciences, in cosmology and in European studies. These centres of excellence have since experienced significant growth in their funding and international standing. We need to build on these successes and promote and develop other areas of strength in the future, in order to achieve a strong international profile as a University.’

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Fourth International Conference on Responding to the Needs of East-Asian Ear-nearners: Promoting Partnership

The conference, held at Portsmouth in July, was attended by 80 people from the UK and Far East. There were five plenary sessions and 19 workshops, held across one week and attended by 300 people. The changing demands of the international market, changing student and teacher partnerships and changing student-teacher relationships, were all discussed at the conference. Many of the issues and research encouraged and are relevant to the work we are undertaking at the university, according to Roy.

The conference considered several aspects of partnership, including governmental and institutional arrangements and market trends, student-teacher partnerships and student-student partnerships. The conference also reflected on research priorities and the future needs of student-teacher partnerships in the learning environment. The changing demands and role of partnerships were highlighted and there were many alternatives for reviewing institutional partnerships and for increasing the quality and quantity of the research that students produce. The conference proceedings were published and make a valuable contribution to the debate on the future of teaching and learning in higher education.

Promoting Partnership

The conference was designed to help all those who are involved in teaching and learning to reflect on how they can improve their work, take on board new ideas and learn about best practice.

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**Student enterprise**

**Student designs product for national company**

A product design student impressed his bosses on work placement at Salter Housewares so much that they asked him to design a product for their range. Adam Clark, who has just graduated with first-class honours in the BSc Computer Aided Product Design, was asked to come up with a safe-to-use knife sharpener, which required no skill to use and which would fit all major brand knives.

He had spent a year on placement with Salter and designed two kitchen scales, one incorporating a chopping board and the other a large mixing bowl. Both are due to go on sale this year. When Adam returned to University to complete his studies in autumn 2007 the firm contacted him again with a commission to design a knife sharpening tool. It will go on sale next year.

Adam said: ‘When they contacted me last September I was really chuffed. I love the constant evolution of ideas involved in designing something new to meet a need or fill a gap in the market. You have to morph your ideas over and over to evolve innovative designs in an effort to meet the brief.’

Adam’s portfolio can be viewed at www.adamclark-productdesigner.moonfruit.com

**Scrap wind turbine is powering a dream**

A product design student has designed a wind turbine made from 100 per cent recycled materials and able to be built by unskilled workers in less than a day, anywhere in the world.

Max Robinson, who has just graduated from the BSc Honours in Product Design and Modern Materials with first-class honours, has never set foot in a developing country but he now hopes to change that. He wants to take his idea to aid organisations which help throughout the developing world to progress it further, and to travel and see first-hand conditions in some of the world’s poorest countries.

Max’s design converts kinetic energy in wind into electrical energy stored in a battery and he has designed it so it could be made from a wide variety of scrap found locally. Max has designed the wind turbine to be affordable, sustainable and help those in the poorest parts of the world. His prototype was built using scrap found on road sides and in front gardens.

Max said: ‘I wanted to design and build something worthwhile and I am also interested in environmentally friendly design. This turbine isn’t going to change the world, but it could make their lives a lot easier. The nearest alternative wind turbine on the market costs £2,200.’

Since graduating, Max has won the Professor G M Bedford Memorial Prize and has been accepted onto the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship ‘Flying Start’ scheme.

**Staff interview**

**Staff interview: Peter Brook**

Peter joined the University in April as Director of Human Resources. He spoke to Communicator about what he’s been working on, his plans for the future and making the move south.

Can you tell us about your background?

While studying Politics and International Relations at Oxford University, I developed a keen interest in international relations and my early career was in the power industry. I have since gained a wide range of HR experience in both the public and private sectors, mainly in the north-west.

I have headed up HR departments within local government, the fire service and at another university. I was delighted to get this post at Portsmouth – it is a forward-thinking, well managed university in a great location.

What have you been working on since your arrival?

I’ve spent a lot of time meeting and getting to know people around the University. I’ve been impressed by the commitment of staff across all departments – from the customer-focused staff in student halls to the cutting-edge researchers in the Science Faculty. The HR team are a talented group of people – we’ve changed our name from Personnel Services and we will be taking a more strategic approach to achieve better alignment with the University’s objectives. We’re reviewing all our policies and processes to see if we can make them clearer and more accessible.

And your plans for the future?

I am determined to put emphasis on staff development, leadership and management skills. I want to make appraisals work better through more effective feedback, clear objectives and development opportunities. I will be giving this higher priority, so please refer to the staff development brochure enclosed with this magazine.

Amongst my main priorities are moving towards a partnering approach with the faculties and services, strengthening our specialist support in areas like recruitment, pension advice and health and safety and using the full potential of the new HR information system. This new system will be linked to payroll and will enable managers to access the information they need more directly and accurately.

The issues of women bishops and gay clergy raised by the Vice-Chancellor in the previous Communicator are not about discrimination or imposing rules or judgements upon secular society. They concern only those who have already sought spiritual relationship with God and with each other, based on the authority of the Christian bible. Whichever side of the debate one eventually comes to support, the arguments are not social or political, but theological, and the Church has a perfect right to its opinions without having to bow to the shifting secular prejudices of the times.

To assert that the Church ‘loses its rules on intrusive judgements about what consenting adults do in private’, implies a lack of understanding of the basic tenets of the Christian faith. It is concerned, above all, with our relationship to our Creator and that must include individuals’ private actions as much as their public ones. If secular society wishes to set its own agenda with respect to differences in sexuality and gender, then of course they have every right to do so. However, it would be both arrogant and illiberal to then deny the Christian Church a voice in the matter. The Church has not only a right, but a moral duty, to speak out whether secular society likes what it says or not.

My experience of our students’ generation exploring their spirituality is that they have the most respect for religions which are not afraid to speak up for the beliefs and values they profess to hold and the contempt in which the Church of England is often held, is in part because it fails to take a consistent stand on ethical and moral issues.

If we force the Church to agree with society on everything, then ultimately it stands for nothing.

Wendy Powell

I have a big agenda; I have given speeches to colleagues and I’ve been impressed by the quality and diversity of work across the University. I want to do all I can to support staff in the provision of a first-class student experience.

**What are your interests outside of work?**

I enjoy watching the Olympics in the summer and I’m a keen follower of cricket; I’ll certainly be looking forward to visiting the Rose Bowl. I’ve been very impressed by the local pride in the cup winning team and I will try to make it to a few Pompey games this season.

I also enjoy walking, going to the gym and the cinema and theatre when possible, but my nine-year-old son takes up a lot of my time and energy! We are looking forward to our new life on the south coast – especially being close to the sea. The weather should be an improvement too after living in Manchester!
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