

QMYOU

MAGAZINE

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF
QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY
Issue 90 | APRIL 2023



**Why Thursdays are the
best night of the week for
QMU students**

**On top of the world
with Mostafa Salameh**

**'Sea of Hope' raises
awareness of plight of
refugees**



**Queen Margaret
University**
EDINBURGH



Principal's Welcome

Right now, it is impossible to ignore all the negative stories that we hear in the media relating to the cost of living crisis and world events. We are living through challenging times, but our history shows us that when the going gets tough, QMU gets going!

Since our beginnings in 1875, QMU has always responded positively in dealing with the most pressing issues that affect our society. Indeed, that has been evidenced through our work in assisting the country's recovery from the pandemic. It has been heartening to see how staff, from across the University and Students' Union, have pulled together, in true QMU style, to support students with the cost of living. Our Thank Goodness It's Thursday (TGIT) events, which provide free food and social opportunities, are proving to be a real boon for cash-strapped students. But with an eye on the bigger picture, TGIT is just part of QMU's wider response to building a stronger community and supporting students through the current situation. On page 29, you can read more about why Thursday's are now the best night of the week for QMU students.

In this edition of QMYOU, we are also sharing stories about a range of graduate careers – focusing on the roles that some of our healthcare students have moved on to since graduation. Find out more about where a career in podiatry (p6-7) or nursing (p8-9) can take you.

The student experience encompasses much more than what individuals learn in the classroom. Often, it is the extracurricular activities that develop a student's confidence and shape their future career. That's why it's very rewarding to see how the Student and Vice-Chancellor's Development Fund is allowing students to benefit from opportunities which may otherwise not be open to them. On page 23, Ellen Clark shares her passion for sailing and tells us how the Fund has allowed her to compete in a national sailing competition.

One of the main driving forces of our work at QMU is to develop graduates and staff who want to make a difference in the world around them. It is difficult not to be moved by the story of our media practice lecturer, Walid Salhab. Walid had to flee Lebanon in the 1970s when the civil war was raging. On pages 18-16, you can find out how Walid is now taking the international film festival circuit by storm with his new animation film 'Sea of Hope', which aims to raise awareness of the plight of refugees escaping conflict.

No-one could fail to be impressed by the story of Mostafa Salameh, who received an honorary degree from QMU last year. Mostafa, a graduate of QMU's BA Hospitality and Tourism Management, has achieved extraordinary things in his life. Find out on pages 16-17 about his adventures as a mountaineer, charity fundraiser and motivational speaker, and his work inspiring and transforming the lives of hundreds of people.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of QMYOU and take inspiration from some of our news, initiatives, student stories and graduate interviews. If you're a graduate, stay connected with QMU through our alumni office E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk, and if you are a member of the public or are new to the University and want to connect, please talk to our Development team or email development@qmu.ac.uk about ways you can get involved and support our work.

With very best wishes
Sir Paul Grice FRSE, FAcSS

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Make the most of our space for your events

STAY CONNECTED - Keep up to date with QMU's news, events, initiatives and successes by following us on social media.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Fancy studying a postgraduate degree online?

Whether you're in Scotland or at the other side of the world, it is now possible to study for a QMU postgraduate degree online.

Thanks to a new partnership with Higher Ed Partners (HEP), a well-established provider of top quality, affordable, online courses, QMU is now offering a suite of fully online postgraduate programmes.

There are seven courses to choose from, encompassing Education, Healthcare Management, Nursing, Global Health and Public Health, reflecting QMU's long-established expertise in these fields.

These new online courses started in March 2023. But if you can't make up your mind quite yet, don't worry – there are multiple start dates for each course, each year. □

Proud to be at the forefront of BSL education in Scotland



QMU has been a real driving force in the progression of British Sign Language (BSL) education in recent years, and last year, Edinburgh's four universities marked their collaborative success in leading BSL and deaf studies in Scotland and across the UK.

On the International Day of Sign Languages, Queen Margaret, Edinburgh, Napier and Heriot-Watt universities held an event which celebrated the work of all four universities, and recognised the future potential of collaboration in further strengthening BSL and deaf studies education and research.

In 2018, QMU launched the UK's first online master's degree in British Sign Language interpreting. The MSc Advancing Practice in Signed/Spoken Language Interpreting is for experienced interpreters

who work between a signed and spoken language. This unique online course, which responds to the growing demand for high quality interpreting skills, is accessible for interpreters from across the UK and internationally.

For those who don't want to commit to a full master's, QMU also offers standalone modules suitable for experienced interpreters working between signed and spoken languages. On top of that we are offering a short course on working with sign language users and interpreters, which is aimed at anyone working in an environment where engagement with sign language users might occur. □

Advancing work in equality, diversity and inclusion



Social justice is right at the heart of everything QMU stands for and we are always looking at ways we can build and improve our work in this area. With this in mind, last year, QMU appointed Professor Paul Miller PhD as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion & Anti Racism Adviser.

Professor Miller now provides advice and guidance which is helping QMU advance its equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work. Over the last few months, Professor Miller has been carrying out an EDI culture review of the experiences and outcomes of BAME staff and students in particular. QMU will be the first university in the UK to undertake such a broad EDI Culture Review looking into EDI issues affecting both staff and students. The findings will help QMU strengthen its current EDI strategy and action plan and develop a meaningful anti-racism strategy and action plan. □

Senior staff wear 'MenoVest™' to simulate symptoms of menopause



In January, QMU held a Meno(pausitivity) day to raise awareness, understanding and empathy for women going through menopause at work. Developed in collaboration with the menopause awareness organisation, 'Over The Bloody Moon', the event involved senior staff wearing a specially constructed vest which simulates some of the symptoms of menopause.

The MenoVest™ activity, which allows people to experience hot flushes, brain fog and other symptoms often encountered during the menopause transition, was part of a larger awareness event to help QMU create a supportive culture and promote awareness across different age groups and genders.

Kirsten Baird, General Manager of QMU's Students' Union helped to shape the event. She said: "Menopause affects everyone, whether it's you, a family member, friend or colleague. Sixty-seven percent of QMU staff and seventy five percent of our students are female, so it's essential we provide a range of support within our wider university community.

"It's also important that we create understanding and empathy amongst our student populations as many of our graduates, particularly those working in the allied health professions, will encounter patients and clients who are going through menopause." □

Creating the next generation of business management and religious studies teachers

If you've ever wanted to become a business management teacher or a teacher of religious studies in a secondary school, now might be your chance!

QMU is offering two new postgraduate degrees which will equip graduates to work as teachers of business management or religious, moral and philosophical studies (RMPS) in Scotland's secondary schools.

The new one-year PGDE degrees provide an internationally recognised secondary teaching qualification and build on the highly successful portfolio of teaching courses that QMU has offered in recent years.

Discussing the new courses, Simon Hoult, Associate Head of Psychology, Sociology and Education at QMU, said: "We're excited to help develop a new generation of religious education teachers who can advocate for social justice, sustainable lifestyles and health and wellbeing. This new course will help pupils to grapple with moral and ethical issues, equipping them to face the challenges of 21st century citizenship.

"In addition, if business graduates are looking for an inspiring, challenging and socially empowering career in teaching, our PGDE Secondary (Business Education) will allow them to blend their passion for business with the education of young people."

One of the great benefits of these two courses is the guarantee of paid employment. Successful graduates of the PGDEs will have secure employment for one year in a secondary school in Scotland as an RMPS or business education teacher. □

Find out more about our new postgraduate teaching courses, visit:
www.qmu.ac.uk/PGDE-business-education
www.qmu.ac.uk/PGDE-religious-moral-philosophical

Where can a degree in podiatry take you?

While some may not be immediately drawn to podiatry as a career path, it has proven to be an extremely rewarding and flexible career which can take you almost anywhere in the UK and beyond.

ASIDE FROM the ability to transform patients' lives, one of the great things about the profession is the incredible choice that podiatrists have to carve out their own career path. Podiatrists can choose to work as an NHS employee in a hospital or community setting, run their own private practice, work from home, become a self-employed locum in private practice, or as a lecturer or researcher in a university. With the flexibility to work full-time or part-time, often without the need for night shifts or emergency call outs, a podiatrist can often create a role which works around personal commitments and fits with their career ambitions.

So, where can a podiatry career take you? Six of our graduates and lecturers give us an insight into their journeys.

From the Scottish islands to lecturer in the capital

WITH A DEGREE in podiatry you can choose to work almost anywhere – from a role working in an inner city to a peripatetic position working across the Scottish islands.

Joseph McIntyre has held several positions with the NHS in Scotland. He worked as a podiatrist with Greater Glasgow and Clyde, before moving to the Shetland islands to experience life as a podiatry specialist. He has also experienced working as an advanced podiatrist in rheumatology with NHS Ayrshire and Arran, and as lead podiatrist in orthopedics with NHS Lothian.

With such a well-rounded background, Joseph now leads the Master of Podiatry (MPod) at Queen Margaret University. Not one to stand still, he's currently juggling his lecturer commitments with studying towards his doctorate! □

From a care background to a health professional in the NHS

COMING FROM a care-experienced background, **Daniel Pauley** found that no-one had any ambitions for him – he was just a kid from care. But he found his place at QMU and had a transformative experience during his degree.

With fantastic support from the University's podiatry department, he excelled during his BSc (Hons) Podiatry, graduating with a first. He said: "QMU believed in me, so I started to believe in myself."

Daniel now has a job he loves – working as a podiatrist with NHS Lothian. Within that role he is a practice educator for current QMU students, and he has just been promoted within Lothian to a Band 6 position.

He continues his connection with QMU through the volunteering work he does with Senior Lecturer in Podiatry, Evelyn Weir. Both Daniel and Evelyn have provided specialist foot care for homeless people in Edinburgh, on and off the street, and continue to do so where possible. □

From volunteering in refugee camps to working as a diabetes specialist

WHILST STUDYING PODIATRY at QMU, **Christine McSweeney** volunteered to work in refugee camps across Europe providing foot care to those in need. It was this exposure that led her to develop an interest in wound management. She then completed an MSc Diabetes.

Having worked in both private practice and NHS, Christine now lives and works in Cork as a diabetes specialist podiatrist for Diabetes Ireland. □

Running a private practice in Fife

PAUL SHARPLES set up his own podiatry business immediately after graduating from QMU. His private clinic runs from the health club at the beautiful Keavil House Hotel in Crossford, Fife. He also provides home visits in the Dunfermline area.

Paul focuses on a holistic approach to podiatry care, taking account of medical history, lifestyle and footwear. His all-inclusive approach involves making sure his patient is fully involved in their individual care plan.

He said: "The most enjoyable part of being a podiatrist is watching someone who walked in with severe pain, walking out pain-free with a smile from ear to ear!" □

Improving foot care in the Middle East

ANDREW GILMOUR, QMU graduate, works as a podiatrist in Kuwait where he provides lower limb education and foot screening, as well as ensuring there are diabetes policies and pathways set up for GPs, medics and nurses.

He trains doctors and nurses on specialist equipment that detects any vascular abnormalities in the lower limb, as well as liaising with vascular consultants to try and improve foot care in the Middle East. □

A career in surgery

A SURGICAL PODIATRIST deals with the surgical management of the bones, joints and soft tissues of the foot and associated structures.

William McMurrich was keen to develop his podiatric career in surgery, so he studied the MSc Theory of Podiatric Surgery delivered jointly by QMU and Glasgow Caledonian University, followed by the podiatric surgical training programme delivered by QMU and NHS Education for Scotland.

Surgical podiatrists work with vascular consultants, diabetologists, orthopedic surgeons and other members of multidisciplinary teams to ensure each patient receives the best clinical outcomes.

William now works as a surgical podiatrist for NHS Tayside. He says the most exciting and rewarding part of his job is working in a team to have a positive impact for his patients by correcting painful foot deformities and removing pain. □



Interested in building a flexible and rewarding career as a podiatrist in the NHS or private practice? Find out about QMU's four-year Master of Podiatry (MPod): www.qmu.ac.uk/master-podiatry-mpod and the two-year Pre-Registration course: www.qmu.ac.uk/Podiatry-Pre-Reg

#QMU will go far

Nursing at QMU can take you anywhere

THE PANDEMIC, and the recent surge in demand for qualified nurses, has brought into stark focus just how critically important the nursing profession is to our health service and our wider society.

Nursing can be an incredibly rewarding, challenging and varied career. Given the range of nursing opportunities available within the NHS and private practice, nurses have tremendous scope to carve out their own unique career in their chosen specialism.

Each career journey is unique – every nurse has a different story. In this feature, we find out about two nurses with very different interests and experiences.



From high dependency in Edinburgh to Director of Clinical Services in Australia

A DEGREE IN NURSING provides a skillset that can take you almost anywhere in the world. It offers graduates the opportunity to have a varied and rewarding career whilst living in an area of their choice. This is certainly true for QMU nursing graduate Caroline Wilson who has found herself climbing the career ladder and living her best life in the beautiful coastal city of Wollongong in Australia.

Caroline started her undergraduate nursing degree in 1999 when Queen Margaret University College, as it was then, was based at its Corstorphine campus. Recalling her experience of teaching and learning, she acknowledges the focus that lecturers had on staying active in nursing practice. She remembers a fantastic lecturer, Allison Gouldburn, who picked up intensive care shifts at the Western General to ensure she could connect current practice with academic learning.

Allison said: "Even though she was a full-time lecturer, she recognised that she still needed to keep up-to-date with what was really happening on the ground. I was very impressed with that." The same is true of many of QMU's healthcare lecturers today.

Following graduation, Caroline worked for a year in gynecology at the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, before transitioning into the cardiothoracic high dependency unit where she worked until 2019. While still working in cardiothoracic critical care, Caroline also studied part-time for her postgraduate degree.

Caroline's adventures Down Under began in 2016 when her husband took part in a 'year-long' teacher exchange programme.

“Going from my previous role working in critical care with post-op cardiac patients to the one I’m in now has just been brilliant. I’ve really enjoyed it, and it just shows the flexibility and diversity of a nursing degree.”

She landed in Oz without a job but soon picked up shifts in a local private hospital and a public hospital, mainly working in Accident and Emergency.

The year flew by, and when the family returned to the UK, they immediately looked for ways to move to Australia permanently.

After two years of planning, the Australian dream became a reality, with Caroline's husband securing a job and Caroline returning to work at the same hospitals she had been at before in Wollongong.

Caroline explained: "It just snowballed. I started off as a registered nurse and then progressed. I did some work as a hospital educator and then I secured a role as Director of Clinical Services."

Something Caroline finds so unique about her vocation is the flexibility of a nursing career. Five of her closest classmates from QMU have all taken part in at least some nursing work abroad.

Caroline said: "Nursing is so portable. You can really go anywhere with it. I could never have imagined that I would end up in the role that I'm in now in Australia."

"Going from my previous role working in critical care with post-op cardiac patients to the one I'm in now has just been brilliant. I've really enjoyed it, and it just shows the flexibility and diversity of a nursing degree." □

Caroline Wilson, Director of Clinical Services, Wollongong Private Hospital, BSc Nursing, Class of 2003

#QMU will go far

By using humour, nurses hope to cultivate a therapeutic relationship based on trust.



You're having a laugh!
– Using humour in the ER?



Kirk Dickerson working in ITU at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

WE ALL KNOW that laughter makes everything better. It can redirect people's focus, taking their mind off any pain that they are experiencing, and can diffuse a serious situation, making it seem less scary. That capacity to improve a situation is what attracted Kirk Dickerson to explore the use of humour in nursing care.

Originally from Idaho, USA, Kirk undertook the BSc (Hons) Nursing at QMU during his early 30s. In his final year, he carried out a fascinating dissertation which explored the use of humour in creating therapeutic relationships in the emergency department.

Kirk's research is recognised as an exciting and ground-breaking piece of work which caught the attention of all the QMU nursing staff. He won 'Undergraduate Dissertation of the Year 2022' and was also awarded the 'Brendan McCormack Award'.

Now 36, Kirk is carrying out his first year of nursing practice as a critical nurse at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. So, in the serious business of ITU - better known to many as intensive care - what fuelled his interest in the power of comedy?

Kirk explained: "From a young age, I realised that humour is something that is generally well received by others, as long as the joke is not at their expense. Throughout my nurse training, I used humour to develop relationships with people in my care, and they almost always responded positively. If I instigated the humour, I noticed that other patients in the vicinity would start joking, or at least chatting to each other more. So, it became a useful icebreaker and social connector."

He continued: "The use of therapeutic humour in healthcare is a way for nurses to help patients manage psychological and emotional difficulties and cultivate therapeutic relationships. I realised there was untapped potential in this area, so for my dissertation I carried out a literature review to explore the use of humour to facilitate, promote, and expedite the formation of therapeutic relationships in the emergency department."

“If I instigated the humour, I noticed that other patients in the vicinity would start joking, or at least chatting to each other more. So, it became a useful icebreaker and social connector.”

"By using humour, nurses hope to cultivate a therapeutic relationship based on trust, by alleviating concerns and fears that service users understandably have when faced with an admission to the emergency department."

Kirk concluded: "The use of humour in nursing practice is a greatly under-utilised resource which has the capacity to help nurses fully care for service users. Whilst I'm still in the early stages of my work in ITU, I believe there will be ample opportunities to use therapeutic humour as I develop my practice in ITU. I can certainly identify particular situations for future exploration, for example, in reducing the stress experienced by family members when visiting a loved one in ITU."

"So, despite the challenges for nurses and patients, I'll keep smiling and laughing to help us through the tough times." □

Kirk Dickerson, BSc (Hons) Nursing, Class of 2022

Secrets of the sea – creating innovative products which nourish body and soul

WHEN WE THINK of seaweed, many of us conjure up an image of different varieties of plants swaying back and forth in the water, as the waves gently lap onto the beach. We don't often think of seaweed as a single food item on a dinner plate or an ingredient which can add flavour to both savoury and sweet foods.

Despite being a staple food in our ancestors' diet, the art of harvesting and preparing seaweed to eat has been forgotten over the years.

But a small company in Fife has taken a traditional occupation and reinvented it for the modern world.

Mara Seaweed has breathed new life into a forgotten natural superfood and reintroduced it to Scotland and the world. Since 2011, the team has collected and harvested by hand a range of seaweed from the crystal-clear waters around the East Neuk of Fife, transforming the humble sea plant into a beautiful range of flavour enhancing products.

The founders have spent the last decade pioneering developments in harvesting, sourcing and processing seaweed. And in 2021, QMU graduate, Emma Lamb, joined the growing team as product development technologist.

With a BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Science from QMU, Emma seemed a perfect fit to support Mara's product and market development. In her final year at QMU, she had focused her honour's project on Mara Seaweed, developing an energy gel for sports nutrition which incorporated seaweed powder. She went on to secure summer work with the company which led to a full-time role, just three months after graduating. She is now one of seaweed's biggest fans.

Discussing the nutritional qualities of this hidden gem, Emma explained: "Seaweed contains up to 85% less sodium than table salt. It gets its salty flavour from minerals like potassium and magnesium, making it a healthy salt alternative. It also contains a unique combination of all 56 vitamins, minerals, electrolytes and trace elements essential for human health, absorbed directly from sunlight and the ocean: so, it's a truly natural, pure superfood. When harvested and dried, the variety of seaweed growing naturally on our shores also produces a surprising array of complex flavours."

Discussing her journey with the company, Emma said: "It has been exciting to be part of a growing company which has gained international success and is now the UK's most innovative seaweed brand. The team at Mara has incredible expertise in nutrition and flavour, and my job involves turning our ideas into reality through the development of new products."

Emma continued: "There is so much to learn at Mara and I get to work with colleagues across the range of specialisms including harvesting, processing and marketing."

"Mara Seaweed's mission is to nourish body and soul by harnessing goodness from the sea and bringing it directly into

people's kitchen. I love working with sustainable food ingredients which are healthy and nutritious, identifying gaps in the market and bringing new products to the marketplace."

Mara's online shop offers an intriguing range of seaweed flavourings. Emma explained: "Different varieties of seaweed produce different flavours. It's great to work with the raw ingredients to identify their impact on taste and texture and to see how well they work when used in combination with different foods."

"Our range of seasonings include dulse, kombu and sugar kelp flakes, whole leaf seaweeds such as kombu seaweed strips, as well as smoked and powdered products, which are both flavoursome and nutritious, particularly when added to different foods like sauces, dips, meats and cakes. Every day we focus on creative ways of delivering the health benefits of seaweed in a delicious and easy to use format, so we sell our flavour enhancers in a variety of shakers, tubs and packets."

Emma concluded: "As our product range and brand grow, we see a rise in the number of people using our natural flavour enhancers as part of their essential everyday nutrition. It's exhilarating to play a part in making the health benefits of seaweed accessible to a wider audience."

You can find out more about Mara Seaweed www.maraseaweed.com. □



Get qualified in food science and innovation

The UK's food industry is crying out for qualified graduates who have the skills and expertise to fill specialist roles and help businesses innovate. QMU's new BSc (Hons) Food Science and Innovation is designed to create graduates who have the essential expertise that employers are looking for. If you're looking for degree that will help you secure a great job in the food & drink industry, visit www.qmu.ac.uk/food-science-innovation

"Different varieties of seaweed produce different flavours. It's great to work with the raw ingredients to identify their impact on taste and texture and to see how well they work when used in combination with different foods."

"I love working with sustainable food ingredients which are healthy and nutritious, identifying gaps in the market and bringing new products to the marketplace."

Emma Lamb
BSc (Hons)
Nutrition and
Food Science,
Class of 2021

#QMU will be career ready

Growing demand for graduates to fill specialist roles in the food & drink sector

WITH JOBS AND opportunities at an all-time high within the food sector, it's a great time for people with an interest in food and science to develop a career in the industry.

In Scotland, there is a demand for enthusiastic, passionate people with the right skillset to help the sector innovate and to respond to growing national and global demands.

But what makes the food industry so interesting and why would a graduate choose a career in this developing, diverse and important industry?

Anil De Sequeira, Senior Lecturer in Food Science at QMU, explained: "Firstly, the food industry is one of the largest and most important industries in the UK, currently employing four million people and generating around £121 billion annually. It's the largest manufacturing sector in the UK, and in Scotland, the food and drink sector is worth around £14 billion each year to the economy.

"Scotland has 18,850 food and drink businesses, which employ around 115,400 people, but it needs more specialist, high quality graduates who can contribute quickly to the sector and grow its potential."

QMU graduates have secured some fantastic jobs in Scotland's growing food industry. Joanna Lis and Callum Robertson studied Nutrition and Food Science at QMU. They share some insights into their current roles and the industry's career opportunities.



Joanna Lis, BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Science, Class of 2021

“graduates with the right degree can choose to go into different areas of the industry – perhaps working for an innovative start-up business; diversifying agriculture, food and farm shops; or developing a specialist role within food manufacturing. The possibilities are limitless!”

Joanna, Product Development Technologist with Bakkavor

JOANNA LIS WORKS for Bakkavor Salads in Bo'ness. The company is a global leader in the production of fresh foods such as salads, pizzas, desserts, dips and ready meals, and produces freshly prepared produce for one of the UK's most prominent high street retailers.

Joanna's job focuses on the development of new food products from concept to the final product which will sell from the supermarket shelf.

Describing her job, Joanna said: "Bakkavor is a huge international food producer, and our section of the business creates fresh food products for one of the UK's major food retailers. I have a very varied job and no two days are ever the same."

She continued: "I'm involved in checking food quality, food analysis, product development, and creating the right type of sustainable packing so that the product fits with the retailers needs and is attractive to the customer. My main focus is in developing new products, but I'm also involved in checking the quality of raw ingredients that will go into my new product and liaising with different departments across the whole factory.

"I essentially work as part of a problem-solving team which looks at how we can develop attractive, fresh food products with the right ingredients, in the right packaging, and at a price that the supermarket customer wants to buy. This means I get to experiment with different ingredients and recipes, which I love; work with different professionals across Bakkavor; and liaise directly with the retailer to ensure I am producing products which they will want to sell to their customers."

It was Joanna's passion for food and her interest in science that attracted her to the industry, but she's been surprised by the diversity of work that's available within the food and drink sector. She said: "At Bakkavor, a graduate could develop their career in different areas of the business, for example, in product development, process or technical, to name but a few. As an international company, Bakkavor also has bases in America, China and Hong Kong, so there could also be opportunities abroad. At the same time, graduates with the right degree can choose to go into different areas of the industry – perhaps working for an innovative start-up business; diversifying agriculture, food and farm shops; or developing a specialist role within food manufacturing. The possibilities are limitless!" □

“One of my favourite parts of the job is taking a product brief from the beginning concept and working alongside the other departments to produce a final product that meets the demand of the gluten free market.”



Callum Robertson, BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Science, Class of 2019

Callum, Development Technologist with Genius Food

FOLLOWING GRADUATION, Callum Robertson spent an exciting two years working in both process & new product development for Bakkavor Salads, Bo'ness. He is now developing his career as a development technologist with Genius Food in Bathgate. Genius Food is a trailblazer in the gluten-free market, producing everything from specialist fresh loaves and rolls, to pancakes and pies for the bakery market.

Describing the gluten-free industry, Callum said: "There is increasing demand for fresh gluten-free products, so it's been exciting to move into a specialist area of the industry which offers so many opportunities. Currently there is still so much unknown about the science behind gluten-free formulations due to the complexity behind the raw materials and their vital function within each gluten-free recipe. In comparison to standard bakeries, the gluten-free industry has only been running commercially for the last 20 years so all the new gluten-free recipes require innovative technology and processes in order to create the best products possible. The challenge facing the industry, however, is that people on a gluten-free diet want delicious, nutritious baked goods which are good for their gut health, but they don't want to compromise on taste, texture, or quality.

"My role focuses on taking briefs designed by our marketing team and helping create prototype recipes in our new product development (NPD) test kitchen. From there, I support the running of manufacturing trials, conduct nutrition and microbiological testing, and source new raw materials required for NPD recipes.

"Although the job role is primarily practical based, a lot of the role revolves around the complexity of sourcing new raw materials which fit in with our strict allergen policy. By running a completely gluten and dairy free site, we face challenges around quality of materials, cost of goods, alongside strict allergen requirements that often include additional testing and precautions taken by suppliers. Alongside raw material sourcing, I also help by monitoring quality in the factory, making recommendations for everyday production, and running factory process audits in order to achieve the best quality possible."

Callum continued: "One of my favourite parts of the job is taking a product brief from the beginning concept and working alongside the other departments to produce a final product that meets the demand of the gluten-free market. Being able to help launch a product that you had a hand in getting across the finish line is a great feeling, especially when you see the product on supermarket shelves!"

Callum concluded: "The food industry in Scotland is becoming an increasingly diverse and innovative place to work. There are amazing opportunities to work in roles from small artisan food businesses, and specialist food producers to world leading food manufacturers. In the space of a few years, I've had the privilege of working for a global leader in fresh food production and now a Scottish-based specialist gluten-free food producer. With the right degree, experience and attitude, the world can be your oyster!" □

The new BSc (Hons) Food Science and Innovation has been developed by QMU in direct response to the food industry's demand for qualified specialist graduates. To find out more about the course and career possibilities, visit: www.qmu.ac.uk/food-science-innovation

#QMU will be career ready

Combining research with gaming helps us understand people's views on climate issues

THE ESCALATING CLIMATE crisis may be one of the most important political issues governments currently face. Annual Climate Conferences, such as the COP27, are now recognisable and significant events in the political calendar. However, as the issues maintain their controversial reputation, canvassing the opinions and biases of people becomes more important than ever before. We spoke to one academic, Dr Kristen Knowles, about her ongoing research to use short interactive games to canvass people's thoughts on climate issues. The research specifically looks at unconscious biases people may have towards, not just climate issues, but all kinds of important social topics.

Dr Kristen Knowles is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Queen Margaret University. She has a background in researching social perception - the way we perceive other

people, our social world and the world around us.

Recently Dr Knowles has been working with Scottish

games developer Playmob Labs to create a new way to survey people's feelings about the climate crisis. The company produces surveys for Freemium mobile games. These surveys are often used for market research purposes for large companies such as Burberry, TSB and even the United Nations. The surveys appear on screen while people are playing a Freemium game. To incentivise the player to conduct the survey, they are offered in-game currency or extra lives which allow them to progress in the game.

For years, Playmob Labs has been working

alongside the United Nations to put surveys about climate issues in Freemium well-known games like 'Clash of Clans' and 'Angry Birds'. However, now Playmob Labs and Dr Knowles have been working to create, not a survey but a "minigame", which can be placed inside Freemium games. These minigames will catalogue people's implicit feelings towards crucial social issues like the climate crisis.

Funded with an Innovation Voucher from the Scottish Funding Council, this 'minigames' research project involves users sorting different words related to both the natural and engineered world into categories that relate to them personally. By doing so, the responses can demonstrate how deeply the players connect their own lives with the natural world. This then helps indicate their beliefs about the environment.

Dr Knowles describes these minigames: "We started developing a game that could be inserted in a pop-up space on screen. We called it a minigame because it's designed to be played in less than 60 seconds. We wanted the way people played the game to reflect their core beliefs about the environment. Our challenge was to get an implicit judgment rather than an explicit statement about their beliefs."

Dr Knowles explained the process: "We created a word sorting task. A word would appear in the middle of the screen and the player chooses to swipe them into a bucket on either side. We would measure people's implicit assumptions based on the speed they sorted the words and the number of mistakes they made. The words were a mixture of four categories: things that relate to (1) yourself, (2) other people, (3) the natural world, and (4) the built environment. During the swiping process, the player matches up words that describe themselves - like 'me', or 'I' or 'mine', with something that describes the natural world - like 'forest', 'birdlife, or 'river'. People's skill at grouping these terms together could say something about how they view their place in the natural world and whether they are conscious environmentalists."

As part of the research process, the minigames were initially trialled with 500 people in a stand alone study to see how successful they were in predicting people's attitudes towards climate change.

Freemium games have a massive international player base and the reach of games, along with the potential to break a lot of socioeconomic barriers, is extraordinary. Dr Knowles explained: "It's mind boggling that the research I do could potentially show up in massive games like Angry Birds or Pokémon Go. It's allowed us to canvass people's opinions on a scale that is not usually possible in traditional academic research."

She continued: "These games are free, so players don't have to pay lots of money to engage with them on their phone. Being able to survey people from diverse populations, who may not normally access traditional survey methods, is a gamechanger!"

"In the UK, there is a panel which completes surveys for companies like YouGov and ICM. These traditional polling companies use around 1000 people, but we can potentially reach 100,000 people in Senegal - that's really cool! In terms of gathering the opinions of more people from different geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds, it has the potential to involve people in conversations on the climate crisis who are usually overlooked but also disproportionately more likely to be impacted by it."

Dr Knowles aims to take the research to the next stage by securing a PhD studentship to collaborate further with the United Nations. It is her hope that the minigames model could become a part of the United Nations' wider strategy to canvas people's opinions on other critical issues affecting society. □

“It's mind boggling that the research I do could potentially show up in massive games like Angry Birds or Pokémon Go. It's allowed us to canvass people's opinions on a scale that is not usually possible in traditional academic research.”

“It has the potential to involve people in conversations on the climate crisis who are usually overlooked but also disproportionately more likely to be impacted by it.”



Dr Kristen Knowles,
Senior Lecturer in Psychology

#QMU can make a difference

On top of the world with Mostafa Salameh

There are some people who are put on this earth to do great things, and QMU graduate Mostafa Salameh is one of them.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS ARE astonishing, and despite coming from humble beginnings, Mostafa has shown the world that anything is possible if you dream big!

Mostafa is one of only 20 people in the world to have completed the 'Explorers' Grand Slam', an adventurers' challenge to reach the North Pole, the South Pole and all of the seven summits which are the highest mountain peaks of each of the seven continents (including Everest)!

Born in Kuwait to Palestinian refugee parents, Mostafa has not only transformed his own life, he's impacted the lives of thousands of people through his incredible fundraising efforts and his work as a motivational speaker. If he's not challenging himself physically by scaling the world's largest mountains, he's pushing the boundaries of what he can achieve intellectually and looking at new ways to help others achieve their goals.

At 52 years of age, Mostafa has a fascinating CV – mountaineer, charity fundraiser, motivational speaker and author! Such are his achievements, that in 2022, QMU, his alma mater, awarded him an honorary degree in recognition of his passion for social justice and his commitment to improve the lives of others.

But his journey had a rocky start – and it's only by sheer grit and determination that he's got to where he is today.

Mostafa parents met in a refugee camp in Jordan, but they moved to Kuwait where Mostafa spent his childhood. Aged 18, he relocated to Jordan to embark on a hospitality course at college. He was soon joined by his family who had to flee Kuwait near the start of the Gulf War.

Mostafa was desperate to seek a better life for himself and his family, so he travelled to London, where he initially found work in the kitchen of the Jordanian Embassy.

Settling in England was challenging. Mostafa explained: "It was a massive shock at first, but it was my opportunity to support my family. My mum and dad had lost everything when they left Kuwait – my dad's job, their money, personal possessions, everything! So, I aimed to send half my wages back to Jordan."

Discussing his challenges in learning a new language, he explained: "I taught myself English by reading tabloid newspapers and practising word and sentence exercises while I watched the children's TV show 'Sesame Street!'"

After many years of working long hours in bars and restaurants in England, Mostafa moved to a new life in Scotland where he was accepted onto the Hospitality and Tourism Management degree course at Queen Margaret. Recalling his time, he said: "Queen Margaret became my home. I loved the atmosphere on campus – there was such acceptance and support. My time at Queen Margaret definitely shaped who I've become."

His magnificent mountaineering journey began a few years following graduation in 2000. Mostafa had a dream of standing on top of the world making the adhan, the Islamic call to prayer. Despite having no prior mountaineering experience, he was determined to turn his dream into reality.

“after four years of tough training and two unsuccessful attempts, he became the first Arab to reach the peak of Mount Everest from its south side.”

With the support of friends and sponsors, and after four years of tough training and two unsuccessful attempts, he became the first Arab to reach the peak of Mount Everest from its south side. After several big climbing achievements, he realised he wanted his actions to have an even greater purpose – to help others!

"Climbing is even better when it helps raise money for important causes," Mostafa said.

"Fundraising is my biggest achievement, not climbing Everest or completing the Explorers' Grand Slam. It's the money I've raised to help others that's important – for people living with cancer, refugees and children wounded by wars. I'm passionate about making a difference in the world, not just now, but for the future."

So far, Mostafa has raised over five million dollars for charitable causes!

Nowadays, Mostafa leads guided adventures all around the world, helping others achieve their dreams. When he's not scaling the heights, he works as a motivational speaker and writer, inspiring others by sharing his life experiences.

He's also published several books including his autobiography 'Dreams of a Refugee', which details his childhood in the Middle East, his rediscovery of Islam and his mountaineering adventures.

The importance of fulfilling dreams is always at the heart of Mostafa's advice, whether he's guiding a climb, giving a TEDx Talk to corporate clients or inspiring young people in the Middle East.

He confirmed: "We all need to have a dream. Each of us has an Everest inside us to climb - it's not necessarily a mountain, but it's important to have goals we can achieve."

“We all need to have a dream. Each of us has an Everest inside us to climb - it's not necessarily a mountain, but it's important to have goals we can achieve.”



"My message is always the same - nothing is impossible. I achieved my dream, and you can achieve yours. It makes for a more exciting and rewarding life."

Mostafa's next ambition is to run seven marathons, in seven continents, in seven days. The aim is to help raise awareness and support for the plight of Palestinian refugees, like his parents, who still live in Jordan.

Mostafa's life is an extraordinary one – a journey of determination, faith and strength. When asked about the greatest lesson he's learned in life so far, he quotes a verse from the Qur'an: "Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." Qur'an, 13:11 □



Mostafa inspires people to achieve their goals through motivational speaking



Mostafa is awarded an honorary doctorate from QMU in 2022



Sea of Hope - Building compassion for refugees through the power of film

THE SHOCKING IMAGES of immigrants travelling in inadequate boats across perilous seas to the UK in the hope of a better life, is something we are all too familiar with.

Despite the often tragic outcomes for many desperate men, women and children who flee their country in the pursuit of safety, one can almost feel powerless and ultimately disconnected from someone else's battle for survival.

But this is not true of Walid Salhab, a lecturer in media practice at QMU.

Originally from Lebanon, Walid is an award-winning filmmaker who has worked at QMU for nearly 20 years. Known for his mesmerising short films of Edinburgh and Scotland, he has gained international recognition for his unique and dynamic style of stop-motion/time-lapse filming.

Having fled war-torn Lebanon at the tender age of 17, Walid knows only too well what it feels like to be displaced and separated from family. After several turbulent years living in Tripoli, Walid was then forced by militia to transport wounded soldiers away from frontline fighting. Following a harrowing situation where he witnessed his best friend and a soldier being shot in front of him, his parents knew they had to get him out. They paid for international flights and Walid ended up in Scotland. Edinburgh has been his home ever since.

Over the last 30 years, Walid honed his craft as a filmmaker. While at QMU, he has researched and developed new techniques for filming which have gained him an international reputation as a

short filmmaker. He has also helped thousands of QMU students develop their skills and knowledge of the film and media industry and successfully launch their own businesses.

Walid's latest creation, 'Sea of Hope', is a deeply touching animated short film about a migrant father and son's journey across the sea. His gift for visual storytelling, on a subject that is so relevant to our times, is having an impact across the globe. Sea of Hope has won over 50 awards at international film festivals, from Vancouver to Dubai. And the award list seems to increase every week!

Walid said: "After doing so much stop-motion/time-lapse filming, I had to learn something new, to keep my teaching fresh for my students. Sea of Hope has been four years in the making. I taught myself how to do animation, and I nearly gave up. It took two years of research and two years of actual filmmaking. But I just felt I needed to use my skills – do what I could – to share this story and create an emotional and visual connection with the plight of refugees. These are desperate people – they have nothing. We need to 'see' them and show compassion for our fellow human beings."

Walid employed a process which uses 3D animation, which is then transformed into 2D hand-drawn traditional artistic animation.



"Sea of Hope is probably one of the most important short films I've ever produced. It shares an important message which goes beyond any borders, and I hope it helps reinforce the need for compassion and understanding in our turbulent and ever-changing world."

He explained: "I made the whole film as a 3D animation film then I passed all the shots in separate layers to the artist, Cristiana Messina, who used a process called rotoscoping. The process uses animation techniques to trace over motion picture footage, frame by frame, to produce realistic action. In our case, that was the 3D animation I had produced."

Discussing its success, Walid said: "I completed the film in January 2022 and the response on the international film festival circuit has been overwhelming. It's made semi-finalist or has won best animation film in many different festivals, but it's also received awards as best short, best director and best sound."

Walid concluded: "It has been a gruelling but rewarding experience. Most years, I like to create a film which makes a connection with people. But, as a visual storyteller, Sea of Hope is probably one of the most important short films I've ever produced. It shares an important message which goes beyond any borders, and I hope it helps reinforce the need for compassion and understanding in our turbulent and ever-changing world."

Walid's is now working on a feature animated film called 'Once upon a time in Lebanon'. □



#QMU can make a difference

IN CONVERSATION

Thomas Kelly, Head of Development and Alumni, chats to Seb Melrose, BSc (Hons) Business Management, Class of 2019

Racing driver, entrepreneur and Netflix star – is Seb Melrose now too hot to handle?

#QMU will go far



“I can’t thank QMU enough for supporting me in my final year, when I was juggling studies with my first professional racing contract.”

IT IS NOT EVERY day you get a chance to chat with a professional racing driver, entrepreneur, social media influencer and reality star...but, Business Management graduate Seb Melrose, has made that possible.

I am sitting in my home office in Edinburgh on a snowy Monday morning; Seb joins our call from Thailand. He finds himself a quite spot in a local bar and the golden sunlight makes for a beautiful backdrop to our afternoon chat.

“I’m actually here for business, but the deal is now done, so I have a day for some down time before heading home to London”, Seb explains.

“I messed up at school. I loved the social aspect of it, but hated textbooks, so I didn’t apply myself. I was young and cocky. I left school after just turning 17, didn’t get into uni, so I joined my dad’s waste management business.

“I had a terrible attitude. Even though my dad insisted I started out as a litter picker, I assumed I’d take over the business one day without really having to try. But, after just six-months of working for my dad, he fired me. I deserved it - I was always late.” So, while his other friends were all at university, Seb enrolled in a six-month HNC in Business at Edinburgh College.

“I liked it! I knew business was something I was interested in, so I continued from HNC to HND level. I still thought that I’d missed my chance of going to university, but my tutors explained the possibility of a direct entrant route to QMU.” Seb was able to use his HND to move directly into the 3rd year of the BSc (Hons) Business Management at QMU.

“QMU just felt right, it felt relaxed, and much more practical in focus which kept me interested. I can’t thank QMU enough for supporting me in my final year, when I was juggling studies with my first professional racing contract. I had signed for BMW, which took me to Germany every few weeks.”

“I wanted my brand to be ready for the show coming out and I’ve used my increasing social following to grow my business.”

Seb’s passion has always been motor racing, constantly striving to follow in the footsteps of his former racing driver godfather, Dario Franchitti. “It would have been so easy for QMU to say ‘It’s racing or your education’...but they didn’t.’ Instead, they helped me pursue my passion and my education at the same time. I’ll always be grateful for that.”

Seb talks passionately about his time at QMU – making friends, playing football on the pitches at the sports centre and, most importantly, developing people and life skills.

“What a rollercoaster my life has been since graduating. I was lucky to graduate just before COVID. I got the full graduation ceremony and the chance to make my family proud. As I crossed the stage at the Usher Hall to get capped by the Chancellor, we realised I had achieved what we never thought possible.

“I signed to race for Porsche not long after leaving uni, but the pandemic hit, and racing was cancelled. Over the next few years, I worked with my dad again. He had sold his waste management company and was now building houses.”

This leads on to the question of how Seb got on the Netflix series ‘Too Hot to Handle’.

“I was approached on Instagram. Of course, I thought I was going on ‘Wild Love’, not Too Hot to Handle.” For all you non-Too Hot to Handle Fans, I recommend searching the show to understand how it works.

“I loved the show. I learnt loads and I used all my people skills that I mentioned earlier. I knew it would be loads of fun, but I also thought the show could work as a platform to launch my business career.” This is exactly what Seb has done. There was a year between filming the show and its release on Netflix, during which Seb built his first business venture, ready to piggy back on his increased influence as the show released.

“I built ‘Reprimo’, which is a health brand focusing on 100% natural health products. I wanted my brand to be ready for the show coming out and I’ve used my increasing social following to grow my business.” Seb now has 500k followers on Instagram and 300k followers on Tik Tok – easily qualifying him as a social influencer. I am fascinated to hear Seb talk about his own brand. The ‘Seb Melrose’ brand is something he has focused on since he was 16. It’s clear that keeping his brand ‘clean’ is important to him. He’s focused on doing the right thing and understands that being authentic, transparent and genuine will lead to a longer and more successful career.

“I’ve been offered so many opportunities for business and partnership since the Netflix show aired in December 2022. I’m turning down opportunities for big paydays that I’d have bitten your hand off for a year ago. But I’m focused on the long term - the bigger picture is important.”

Seb is clearly a passionate entrepreneur at the beginning of an exciting career in both business and sport. However, the thing that comes across about this young man, is his drive! You can almost hear his internal motor roar as he talks excitedly about ‘what comes next’!

And in a flash, our conversation ends. His taxi arrives to transport him to his next adventure! □



Reflecting on the past: student documentary shines light on grandmother's young life in communist Romania



THE JOURNEY FROM being a teenager into full adulthood can be an overwhelming experience, but when you start to make comparisons between your own experience of this new stage in life and the experiences of the generations that came before – with a global pandemic added into the mix – it can be overwhelming.

Yet this is the experience a third-year QMU film and media student Roxana Capris turned into a fully formed idea for a short documentary. After turning twenty last summer, Roxana found herself not only reflecting on her own teenage years, but also making comparisons to those of her grandmother, when she turned twenty, not only in a different time and country, but in a world almost unrecognisable today.

“At my age, my grandmother was already divorced and a mother. It was a time when women weren’t encouraged to pursue an education or a career. She lived her twenties through a drastic communist regime which left her only dreaming of what life in a different country could look like.”

Roxana and her grandmother are both from Bucharest, Romania's capital and largest city, but the similarities of their youth essentially end there. For Roxana's grandmother, who entered her twenties under communism in the 1960s, the thought of going abroad to study would have been unimaginable. The freedoms of the west were, at the time, a distant dream. It was these differences that Roxana wanted to explore in her debut short film 'Twenty'.

“I was always planning on making this film”, said Roxana, but it was perhaps this unique situation that allowed her to come up with the concept and to turn this dream into a reality. To do so, Roxana applied to the QMU's Student and Vice-Chancellor's Development Fund and successfully secured funding to cover the costs of flights, equipment and production costs.

In September 2021, Roxana, alongside her partner Markuss (also a QMU film and media student), flew out to Romania and quickly set about immersing themselves in her gran's world and capturing this on film: this included everything from asking her gran to reflect on her past and what she may have done differently, to painting the white wall of her apartment blue for visual effect (before having to paint it back again!). Roxana even surprised her grandmother with an appointment to get matching tattoos – something else that would never have been possible in her youth!

Roxana explained: “I wanted to tell the story of my grandmother's early twenties and invite the viewer to reflect on their own time turning 20. I turned 20 last August, during the Scottish summer. But I am a university student, in a country where I wasn't born, in a world where I have the freedom to live where I choose.

“At my age, my grandmother was already divorced and a mother. It was a time when women weren't encouraged to pursue an education or a career. She lived her twenties through a drastic communist regime which left her only dreaming of what life in a different country could look like.

“I have always been fascinated by my grandmother's stories and I wanted to share that with a wider audience. And, thanks to the generous support from the Student and Vice-Chancellor's Development Fund I was able to make this documentary possible.”

On returning to Scotland, Roxana had the daunting task of editing all the footage – a job made all the more difficult due to a technical error that resulted in the original file being deleted and her having to start again from scratch. This hard work paid off, however, as not only was she happier with the second cut, but it was also selected for the New Visions Short Film Competition at the 2022 Edinburgh International Film Festival. “In a strange way, it was all for the best”, she mused.

This success has only continued, with Twenty having since been screened at the Eastern European International Movie Awards, and even making an appearance at the St Andrew's Film Festival.

As Roxana's star continues to rise, so does that of her gran – more audience members fall in love with her at each screening. Roxana joked: “It's more her film than it is mine!”



Student sets sail with donor support

“Being physically active and doing something I enjoy has helped strengthen my understanding of the link between physical therapy and mental health.”

A STUDENT'S UNIVERSITY experience is about more than their academic achievements. Often, it's the extracurricular activities that can help build their confidence, skills and friendships, and shape their future career. That's why QMU's Student and Vice-Chancellor's Development Fund is so important. It helps students benefit from key opportunities that they may otherwise miss out on.

Ellen Clark is a fourth-year QMU physiotherapy student with a passion for sailing. Not only has her favourite hobby helped with her own health and wellbeing throughout her time at university, it's strengthened her understanding of the connection between physical therapy and mental health.

Ellen was understandably delighted to secure an award of £820 from QMU's Student and Vice-Chancellor's Development Fund, which allowed her to compete at last year's RS200 National Championships at Hayling Island Sailing Club. She gives us an insight into her experience of sailing and her time at the competition.

Tell us more about your sailing.

My mum sailed when she was young. She thought I'd enjoy it too, so when I was about 10 years old, she enrolled me on a week-long course during the summer holidays.

I'm a member of the East Lothian Yacht Club in North Berwick. As well as racing, I'm a dinghy instructor for the club and train young people and adults how to sail.

I sail on a two-person boat, with my sailing partner who's the helm, with me being the crew. We've been sailing together for three and half years.

I've only been racing competitively for a few years. Our boat is a RS200 dinghy, and we compete in sailing events across Scotland and the UK.

What do you enjoy most about sailing?

I love being out on the water. It's great that it's a lifelong activity, and something I can do competitively or just for fun.

I also enjoy the social side of things. I've made long-lasting friendships with students from other universities and sailors I've met at our home club and through competitions.

Does your physiotherapy studies enhance your sailing performance?

Definitely, I'm more aware of the muscles I'm using when I'm sailing, as well as how my gym training affects my body. I'm conscious of muscle recovery too. The skills I've learned at QMU are also helpful for when my sailing partner or I are injured!

How has sailing influenced your physiotherapy studies?

Being physically active and doing something I enjoy has helped strengthen my understanding of the link between physical therapy and mental health.

My dissertation focuses on the benefits of cold-water swimming as a therapy.

How did the Fund help you?

It paid our entry fee to the RS200 National Championships and travel costs. We also bought a new jib, which is one of three sails on the boat. This helped improve our boat's speed and put us on a level playing field with the top sailors in the class in terms of equipment.

I'm so grateful to QMU for recognising and supporting something that's an important part of my life out with the classroom.

Tell us about the RS200 National Championships?

It's a five-day event, with two races each day that last about an hour.

Last year's competition was eventful before we even raced. Our car broke down and we arrived at the event on the back of an AA tow truck!

Each race began with us lined up in the dinghy park waiting to launch; we then sailed for around 30 minutes to the racecourse for a gate start. We raced a windward/leeward course, which has two marks. We sailed upwind from our start line to the first mark (the windward mark) moving in a zigzag, went round the mark and then sailed downwind to the second mark (the leeward mark).

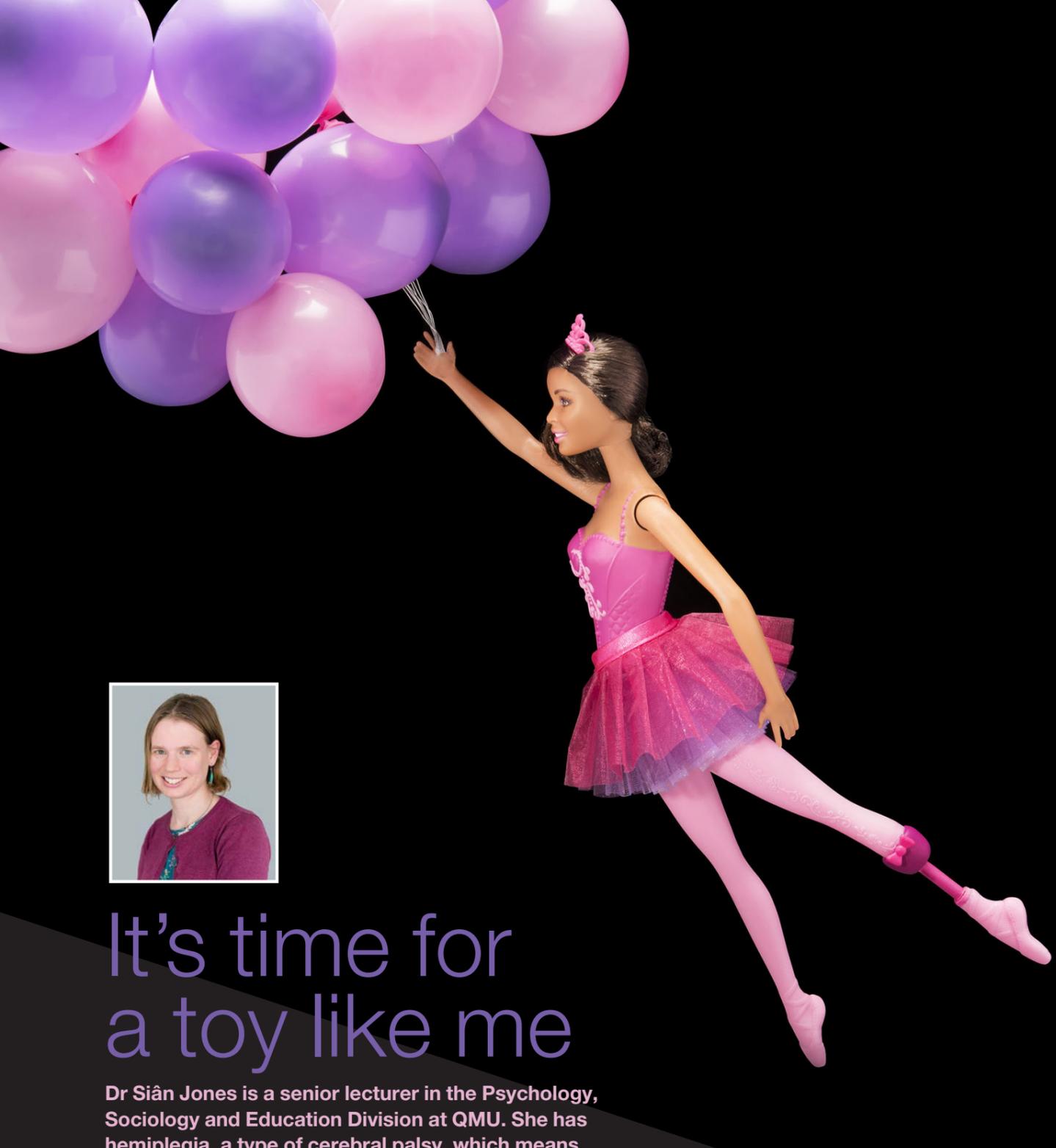
In events like the Nationals, you sail beside professionals who are competing at the highest level. The RS200 is considered one of the most competitive sailing classes in the UK with Olympians, such as silver-medalist Luke Patience, regularly competing.

Were you pleased with your performance?

Yes, we finished 26th out of 182 boats overall. Our best result was seventh place in one race.

This was the most competitive championship there's ever been with the highest number of entrants. We improved our position from the previous year, where we finished 31st out of 120 boats.

We're hoping to do even better when our home club in North Berwick hosts the RS200 National Championships in 2023! □



It's time for a toy like me

Dr Siân Jones is a senior lecturer in the Psychology, Sociology and Education Division at QMU. She has hemiplegia, a type of cerebral palsy, which means she is disabled.

“There is growing evidence that toys and resources representing disability help non-disabled children think about making friends with disabled kids.”

Follow the project on Twitter: @QMUToyResearch

Read more about the research: www.qmu.ac.uk/Innovation-Project-Accessible-School-Resources

#QMU can make a difference

GROWING UP, SIÂN noticed there were no toys in the toybox or the shops that looked like her. If there was a toy that depicted a person with a disability, there might be one with a wheelchair or crutches as part of a hospital set – implying that any physical impairment needed to be fixed. Siân acknowledges that much has been done in schools to represent ethnicity in recent years, but she wants to support teachers to demonstrate diversity of disability in the classroom. She discusses her research and her vision for toys like her to be an essential part of the school toybox!

“Toys are a way into a child’s world – in the words of toymakers, they mirror the world. If there isn’t an opportunity to play with disabled characters, or children don’t come across disabled people doing everyday things in books and films, we’re losing an opportunity to broaden the next generation’s understanding of the world and the people in it.

“There is growing evidence that toys and resources representing disability help non-disabled children think about making friends with disabled kids. Funding from the QMU Innovation Fellowship allowed me to work with colleague Dr Clare Uytman, QMU students and the charity, Toy Like Me, to explore the effect on the attitudes of children in Scottish primary schools when shown toys representing the disabled community. We also explored language use around disability, focusing on socially-minded rather than a medical understanding of disability.

“We asked children to write a story about a character before and after viewing and discussed images of adapted toy prototypes. These were toys like Barbie with a missing limb, or Olaf the snowman with a cochlear implant (the latter developed by Toy Like Me) alongside commercially available toys which represented a range of disabilities.

“Most stories showed a medical understanding of disability – that there is “something broken”, or “that needs to be fixed”. Some showed a more positive attitude towards disability, an assertion that disability should not lead to limitation, although with added suggestion that this was a potential cause for sadness and potential exclusion.

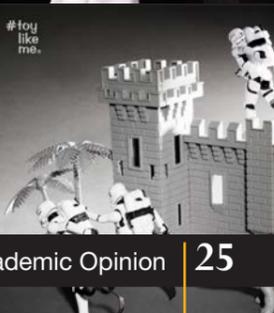
“Following the tasks, children’s reflections on what disability means tended to be more positive, and crucially, children recognised that disability should be seen as part of the wide spectrum of people around them.

“The General Teaching Council for Scotland republished the National Inclusion Framework in 2022. Within it is a series of principles of representation and accessibility which encourage teaching staff to reflect on the concept of disability in schools beyond meeting additional support needs. We realised how important it is to share our research with schools, particularly now they have responsibility to think more broadly about inclusion.

“Teachers need to represent diversity of disability, as they have done for ethnicity. It’s not just about just what’s in books – it’s about what’s on the walls, and what’s going on in the toy corner. Instead of putting characters who use wheelchairs in the hospital corner, move them to the house corner where they enact the tasks of everyday life!”

In 2023, Siân’s team released an accessible set of resources mapped to the Scottish Curriculum. The aim is to provide practical tools teachers need to ensure pupils see disabled people in everyday settings, and to broaden their understanding of disability.

Siân confirmed: “When disability is portrayed more prominently, our research shows only positive outcomes in children’s wellbeing and acceptance. So, let’s start by taking a closer look at the contents of the school toybox!” □



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Using research to build play-friendly communities

#QMU can make a difference

“With its capacity to impact society and to be impacted by it, play should be viewed as an issue of social and occupational justice.”

WE ALL KNOW that play is a crucial part of a child’s development. Children learn, explore and understand the world around them through play. But despite most people being aware of the importance of play, reports from around the world confirm that there is a growing deprivation of play.

Silvia Veiga-Seijo, a PhD student at QMU, understands the value of play, not only for the young people directly involved, but for the wider community. Research has shown that when children play together in their local area, the impact of these interactions not only improves the individuals’ development, but it can also help create supportive, healthy and cohesive communities. That’s why Silvia is using her research to help create play-friendly communities.

Originally from A Coruña in Spain, Silvia is studying towards her PhD with Queen Margaret University and University College Cork within the *P4PLAY programme. When it comes to the importance of play, Silvia doesn’t mince her words. She explained: “Play is a fundamental right for every child and an important daily occupation in their lives. With its capacity to impact society and to be impacted by it, play should be viewed as an issue of social and occupational justice. Every child should have the right to play in their everyday lives.”

She continued: “Due to international concerns about the deprivation of play in our communities, organisations are keen to develop policies which deliver play sessions and play programmes which increase outdoor play for children. However, there is little understanding about how play happens in the community and what play opportunities children would like to have in their community.”

During her time in Scotland, Silvia has been involving children and community members of an East Lothian village, local to QMU, in her research project. By engaging and listening to the children’s

perspectives of play in the community, Silvia is developing an understanding of what children want and need, and is using this information to create with them a play-friendly community. By putting the opinions of children at the centre of the research, Silvia is developing research which is helping shape new policies and create best practice around play and play facilities for children.

She confirmed: “The children in the village are the experts in their play, so their perspectives lead the course of this research. By seeing things through their eyes, and learning from their experiences and thoughts, we can use this rigorous knowledge to work with councils, community groups, funders, families and volunteers to improve opportunities and facilities for play in different communities.”

The research is focused on understanding what, how, when and where play happens in the community; what limits or supports play; and how the community can be more play-friendly. This involves listening to the children’s experiences of play; empowering them to decide how play will be researched in their community; and also considering the opinions of community members who live or work in the village.

Silvia concluded: “The research has real potential to influence policy development, reports, initiatives, programmes and practices which will assist in improving provision for ‘play-friendly’ communities. It also makes authorities more aware of equality of access to play opportunities.

“It’s been a great local project to work on, but I’m really excited by the positive changes that this could lead to for children and communities in Scotland and internationally.”

(Research funded by European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme) □

CAKE is a recipe for success in creating healthy staff teams

“Combined with reflection and action planning, this can be a game changer for teams in terms of improving communication, lightening the load, and engendering team support and understanding.”

DOES YOUR STAFF team need a wellbeing boost! Well, perhaps surprisingly, QMU nurses are promoting the use of CAKE to support the health of individuals and teams who can contribute to the success of organisations.

Since the start of the pandemic, organisations have become far more aware of the need to protect the mental and physical wellbeing of their staff. With significant experience of the stress faced by nurses in the workplace, a group of community nurses and two nurse academics have developed an interactive toolkit called CAKE, which acts as a recipe for self-care and team wellbeing.

CAKE, which stands for Caring for self and others, Attending to what’s happening, Keeping connected and Enabling and empowering, is now available for nurses, health professionals and a wide range of teams across different organisations.

CAKE, which makes use of creative storytelling to help manage stress and wellbeing, has been developed by QMU’s Senior Nursing Lecturer, Dr Caroline Dickson, and Honorary Nursing Lecturer and Founder of ListenUpStorytelling, Dr Kath MacDonald.

The academics co-designed the resource with community nurses who shared their stories of stressful experiences during the pandemic. CAKE is now attracting interest from health and social care professionals, as well as business organisations, who are all keen to support the wellbeing of their own teams.

Discussing the power of storytelling in self and team care, Dr Kath MacDonald explained: “Storytelling has been used for centuries to entertain and engage. In terms of the benefits to healthcare workers and other professionals, using fairy tales and creative methods to share information and express oneself can distance the storyteller from the actual event and help to create a safe space. It provides a new way for people to express and deal with their thoughts and feelings. Combined with reflection and action planning, this can be a game changer for teams in terms of improving communication, lightening the load, and engendering team support and understanding.”

Dr Caroline Dickson said: “We acknowledge there are many wellbeing resources available, but CAKE is unique in its use of storytelling and its aim of developing teams in the workplace. CAKE also empowers teams to decide what their wellbeing strategies will be and encourages them to embed these into everyday practice.” □

CAKE is available as an online resource but can be particularly effective when used face-to-face in staff teams. Find out more about CAKE and its slices at: www.qmu.ac.uk/CAKE-healthy-teams

Interested in the use of storytelling to assist wellbeing? Find out about ListenUpStorytelling at: www.listenupstorytelling.co.uk



*The P4PLAY programme is a European Joint Doctoral programme in Occupational Science for Occupational Therapists, funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network, which is dedicated to enabling play.

'Thank Goodness It's Thursday' is best night of the week for cash-strapped students

A tasty hot meal, a take home food pack and fun social activities have made Thursday evenings the favourite night of the week for many QMU students.

#QMU belong



Principal and Deputy Principal join staff volunteers to help serve meals to QMU students

THANK GOODNESS IT'S Thursday (TGIT), is a weekly initiative launched by QMU to support its students with the cost of living crisis. With over 330 people attending a recent event, the University knows that the support is not only popular with students, but necessary for many who are really struggling with escalating costs.

QMU has an excellent reputation for looking after the welfare of its students and creating a strong sense of community, so senior management and a team of dedicated staff volunteers were determined to relieve some of pressure, particularly over the winter months and the important exam period.

Run from the food court in the QMU campus, TGIThursday gives people a hot meal, a meal pack with a recipe to cook at home, and an evening of social activities. Lecturers and professional services staff dish up at least one soup, one hot main dish and hot drinks to attendees, giving them options for different dietary requirements. The two-day meal packs distributed at TGIThursdays also come with a recipe card, walking people step-by-step through the preparation and cooking process with all the ingredients provided. The idea behind the recipe cards is to let students see how easy it can be to prepare a nutritious but cheap meal for several people.

Not only does TGIThursdays give students the chance to get a warm meal and help keep them from worrying about dinners over the weekend, it's also a great opportunity for people to feel connected with their university community and enjoy time together in a warm space. Activities such as clothes swaps, bingo and raffles give students the opportunity to spend time with friends and classmates. And the staff volunteers, who organise TGIThursdays, get the chance to spend more time with their students and really get to know them.

Simra Aslam and Grace Allan are both first year students studying the BA (Hons) Theatre and Film. Living in the University's self-catered flats on campus, they loved the first event so much that they've made a point of coming along every week.

Simra said: "It's so nice to come to TGIThursday. In my flat, I eat the same cheap food practically every night – a pasta dish – so I've really enjoyed the range of free food at TGIThursday. There's always nice soup, a hot main dish and hot drinks. You never know what's going to be on offer, so it's a nice surprise.

"We've enjoyed the food, but we also like coming along to join in the social activities like the crafting, the quiz and the games night. There's a great community feel at the event and it's really nice to get away from studying."

My favourite dish was the turkey tagine with couscous, and there's always a vegan option. The University also makes up meal packs with a recipe card which we can take away on the night and use it to prepare a meal to share over the weekend. I don't know how I did it, but I've sometimes managed to make the meal pack last me a whole week!

"But, aside from the free food, I also like the chance to take part in the different activities."

Grace said: "TGIThursday is so good. We are really lucky that QMU has made this available for students because some universities are not doing anything like this. We've enjoyed the food, but we also like coming along to join in the social activities

like the crafting, the quiz and the games night. There's a great community feel at the event and it's really nice to get away from studying."

TGIThursday was so well received by students, that the senior management team decided to extend the initiative to run in 2023. Hopefully not only giving students something to eat,

but helping to bring a real sense of community to QMU and reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness as a result of the pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Dr Kat Lord-Watson, Senior Lecturer in Initial Teacher Education, and organiser of TGIT, said: "TGIThursday has been very well-received, and although we're sad it is needed, we are very happy that we've been able to help so many students. We have had some wonderful student feedback, with many of them telling us they look forward to Thursday night, as it's not only a chance to have a satisfying and filling hot meal for the week, but with the option to take any leftovers away for later, along with the food packs we provide, it helps them offset the cost of groceries.

"We've also had lovely comments about how TGIT helps them feel connected to their fellow students, staff, and our wider campus community. This is important, given a recent survey of our students showed the sense of loneliness and isolation they were experiencing as a result of the pandemic disruption. Knowing that we are having this impact is so encouraging to hear, and we hope we can continue to offer a space for students to feel connected and supported by QMU." □



Staff volunteers prepare weekend meal packs



A group of students enjoy a social meal together



Photo from 50th reunion - Edinburgh 2022

50th Reunion - Institutional Management Diploma cohort (1969-1972)

By Isabell Hodgson, (Class of 1972)

OUR GROUP of 12 commenced studying the Institutional Management Diploma in 1969. We were the last cohort to graduate with this award in 1972. Our first year was spent studying at Atholl Crescent, which was the institution's first base in Edinburgh. It was a wonderful place which was steeped in history - if only the buildings could talk! We relocated to the new college building in Clerwood Terrace, Edinburgh, for our last two years. It was a total contrast to our first year, with the new site offering modern buildings and equipment, as well as very comfortable halls of residences.

Our course was very diverse, covering business management; accountancy; science; and cultural studies, the latter which included visits to art galleries. There were also practical subjects such as food and beverage management; domestic services (cleaning), which included a six-week programme cleaning our fellow students' study rooms; and laundry and dressmaking, which included producing curtains and cushion covers! We also carried out work experience in different sectors of the hospitality industry - this was one of the best parts of the course. All of these experiences influenced the future careers of many of the group.

We've all kept in touch since graduation and have held several reunions throughout the years. Our first reunion was held at the Fox Covert Hotel in Clerwood, Edinburgh, where many happy and outrageous memories were shared. We have also enjoyed gatherings at the QMU campus in Musselburgh, as well as reunions in both Edinburgh and York (with many of our group based in the south of England, York is a good halfway point).

On 24th May 2022, we held a 50th anniversary lunch celebration at Amarone in George Street, Edinburgh. This allowed us to revisit old haunts and recall many happy memories from our three years of study in Edinburgh.

The group had travelled from Devon, Somerset, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Argyll, Perthshire, the Borders and East Lothian. ☐



Photo from 45th reunion - York 2017

(left to right) Jennifer Hewitt, Gilly Mackay, Isabell Hodgson, Rowena Turner, Alison Watt, Bridget Phillips and Bobbie Barclay.

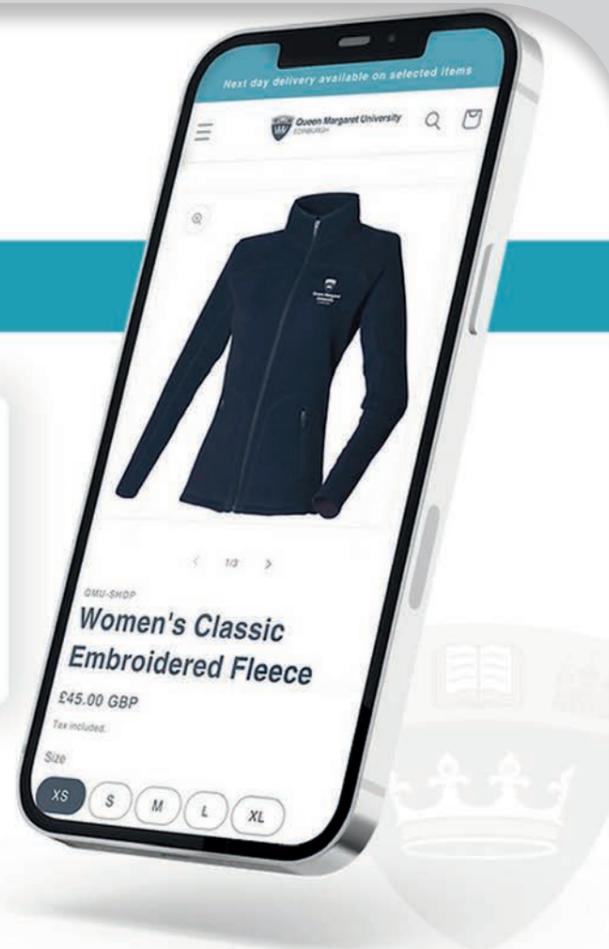
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Graduates' Association Update

By Lindesay Irvine, President

WE HAVE ENJOYED hosting several Graduate Association (GA) events at the Edinburgh New Town Cookery School (ENTCS) on Queen's Street in Edinburgh. It is not only a lovely venue to hold our gatherings, it presents an excellent opportunity for GA members to support the development of QMU students who are studying the BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism. Students on that course hone their practical cooking and service skills under the direction of the School's excellent teaching team, and the cooking and service of some of the GA lunches and dinners is part of their course assessments. In spring 2022, a team of first year students created a meal themed around the platinum jubilee, whereas our Christmas lunch was traditional festive fair. Both events in 2022 were very well attended.

GA members look forward to our next spring event, as well as other themed lunches at ENTCS in 2023, which give students the opportunity to develop their skills in a live setting.

Our Annual General Meeting, which was also held at ENTCS, included a delicious afternoon tea. Committee members agreed changes to the committee staffing and a proposal on the future direction of the GA. There was also a discussion on the sustainability and ongoing maintenance of Madras Lodge (the GA's holiday property in Gullane, East Lothian). It was agreed that Madras Lodge required some financial investment, and we can confirm that maintenance work will commence at the Lodge in early 2023. See photo updates at www.qmugraduatesassociation.com and Instagram @madras_lodge.

Fun coffee get-togethers

GA members hold coffee get-togethers on the second Tuesday of each month. A particular highlight was our visit to the Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, which included a viewing of the 'Knitwear in Fashion' exhibition. The event explored knitwear as a fashion item from the early 1900's up to the present day and included some designer garments from Chanel and Schiaparelli.

The most recent get-together was at National Museum of Scotland. We had coffee, followed by a visit to the Bernat Klein design exhibition - some of us remembered using his fabrics during our studies at QMU!

Event details and invites

Our membership secretary, Claire Seaman, sends out invitations and details of events to members. If you hear of people in the Association not receiving emails from Claire, please do encourage them to contact her at E: claire_seaman@hotmail.co.uk.

Membership of the QMU Graduates' Association

Membership of the GA is open to all students who gain an award from QMU, as well as current and previous staff. With interesting and fun social events throughout the year, we encourage anyone who is not already a member to continue their connection with QMU by joining us as a life member. We would also like to talk to members who might be keen to take on a more active role as a committee member. If you have thoughts or ideas for the GA, please don't hesitate to contact me E: president@qmuga.org.uk. ☐



#QMU belong

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(booking social activities)

Make the most of our **space for your events**

WITH GREEN SPACES, water features, excellent transport links, café bars and all manner of meeting rooms, the QMU campus offers the perfect venue to host social and corporate gatherings.

In recent years, businesses, educational organisations and community groups have used the buildings at QMU to host a wide variety of events.

With large lecture theatres, classrooms of all sizes, 800 on-campus residences, and an experienced events team, we have held international conferences for hundreds of delegates, as well as more intimate meetings for government, public bodies and voluntary organisations.

Lynn Barclay, Conference and Events Manager at QMU, explained: “We have tremendous capacity to provide guests with a range of flexible spaces, as well as event management. Choosing an academic venue for your next event offers you diverse meeting space, up-to-date technology, outdoor recreation space, value for money and an excellent on-site events team.

“Our attractive conference suite has the best location on campus – with views over the water feature and gardens and situated next to casual break-out space with baby grand piano. We can offer conference delegates access to sports facilities, a café bar and creative spaces, and people can use our lovely decking and landscaped gardens to unwind and connect with nature.

“Of course, food is always important, and our catering team provides exciting menu options with high quality ingredients which are influenced by the changing seasons.”

Lynn continued: “During term time, we still have lots of capacity for day time, evening and weekend events, and are keen to host social and community gatherings for local groups and small organisations. So, we can support away days, training events, team building sessions, class reunions, amateur dramatics events, pet shows and family celebrations, to name but a few.”

The University’s Conference and Events team will always do its best to accommodate any QMU graduates who wish to hold business or social events. A **20% discount** will apply to venue hire for all bookings made by our alumni.

Find out more about our event spaces and events management services at: www.qmu.ac.uk/conferences-and-events/ and E: events@qmu.ac.uk.



Good quality catering for all occasions



Welcoming landscape gardens to relax in



150 seater lecture space



Conference suite with views over the water feature

250 seater Halle Lecture Theatre

