

# So...

AUTUMN/WINTER 2014

THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES MAGAZINE

NOTTINGHAM<sup>NTU</sup>  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

## A democracy in DANGER?

How young people are shaping European politics

So...

AUTUMN/WINTER 2014

THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES MAGAZINE

# European democratic politics in CRISIS

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## Welcome to the 2014 Autumn/Winter edition of So... Magazine



Welcome to the new academic year. If you have recently joined us then we hope you have settled well into life at NTU and if you are a returning student then we hope you enjoyed your summer break, and are ready to tackle the year ahead.

Europe has been a hot topic throughout 2014, with the European elections in May, the conflict in Ukraine and the Scottish independence vote, all drawing worldwide coverage.

This edition of So... aims to highlight this theme within topics ranging from European politics to student employability within Europe. With expert opinions from academic staff, and contributions from students, this edition aims to emphasise the role Europe plays in our everyday lives.

Alongside all of this, you'll also find impressive stories and achievements of our students and staff, details of important events including our career events and the usual updates on the activity that is going on within the School.

We hope this edition will leave you feeling inspired and motivated to achieve your very best in the upcoming year.

**Kathie Moore**

Dean of the School of Social Sciences

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## So... Do you want to be a contributor?

So... aims to showcase the excellence of both our students and our staff, and content for future editions is welcomed from all. If you would like to submit an article for the next edition of So... please email [s3.enquiries@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:s3.enquiries@ntu.ac.uk)



## Staff member completes gruelling 27-hour walk for charity



Helen Reed (pictured above) has completed a gruelling walk for charity, walking 105 kilometres in 27 hours from London to Brighton, and raising over £400 for her chosen charity – the British Heart Foundation – in the process.

Advertised as the ‘ultimate walking challenge,’ the event challenged the participants to walk the 105 kilometres from London to Brighton non-stop within 30 hours on the 21-22 June. Soldiering on through the day and night with no sleep and only short breaks to refuel their bodies, the walkers were reliant on their own fitness, grit and determination, and the support of fellow walkers to get them to the finish.

This proved quite a challenge for the participants, with many having to seek help for various ailments or injuries on the way to help them continue. Others had to drop out altogether. The toughness of the task was further illustrated by the fact that only 466 of the 896 who began the course completed it.

Helen, who is Employability Coordinator for the School of Social Sciences, is an experienced walker, having taken part in other challenging events like the 26-mile moonwalks around both Edinburgh and London and other long distance walking events. But even she found it tough going, commenting:

“It was the toughest physical and mental challenge of my life and with my feet in a lot of pain, I had to resort to having them bandaged by St John’s Ambulance staff half way through. From that point onwards, with over 50 km still to go, I was hobbling a little bit, but I put a brave face on and hung on in there as I was determined to finish.”

Helen’s colleague, Senior Lecturer Angela Vesey said, “We’re all very proud of Helen’s achievements, that uphill walk to work through the forest now pales into insignificance!”

Overall, the event proved to be a massive success with over £350,000 raised for the British Heart Foundation to help their continued fight against heart disease.

## Divisional seminar series

The Divisions of Psychology and Politics and International Relations hold regular seminar series over the academic year to invite internal and external speakers to present their research findings.

These seminars are an integral part of our research culture, stimulating

thinking and debate, as well as informing current developments in the various subfields of Psychology, Politics and International Relations.

To find out more, visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events)

## Students feel the heat for charity

Two Social Sciences students have ditched their socks and shoes to walk across embers burning at more than 1200 °F in a bid to raise funds for mental health charity MUTED.

Pradeep Singh and Serene Hadj-Hamou were among the 20 daredevils to take part in the challenge at Wolds pub car park in West Bridgford. The challenge, which involved walking along a 20-foot-long burning path, raised over £4,000 for MUTED – a charity for men with depression.

MSc Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health student Pradeep said, “MUTED is doing a fantastic job in spreading awareness and education of depression and breaking the stigma.”

Reflecting on the experience, she said, “The fire walk was certainly a positive experience and motivation boost for life in general.

“I’ve learnt that overcoming anything is possible when your mind is set on a goal.”

MUTED founder and event organiser Ian Hastings had chosen the challenge to highlight the fact that “people would rather walk across hot coals than talk about depression,” and he wanted to change that.

MUTED’s broken glass charity walk will be taking place on Wednesday, November 5. To take part contact Ian on [info@muted.org.uk](mailto:info@muted.org.uk)



## Student appointed Chair Elect for British Psychological Society (BPS) student committee

Jasmin Stevenson, one of the first year undergraduate BPS student reps in the Psychology Division, has been appointed Chair Elect for the student committee of the BPS.

Jasmin said, “I am very excited about taking on the challenges and responsibilities that come with the position, as well as being able to represent Nottingham and our university within the committee and to the wider Psychological Society.”

She will take up her post in June 2015, after shadowing the current Chair Elect from the beginning of next year.



## NTSU Outstanding Teaching Awards

Psychology lecturer Eva Zysk has been named the winner of the NTSU Outstanding Teaching Awards for the School of Social Sciences.

The Outstanding Teaching Awards provide an opportunity to recognise all the excellent teaching and support staff at Nottingham Trent University.

The awards, which were held in June 2014 at the new City campus Students’ Union building, brought the year to a close with a celebration of academic success.

An Outstanding Teacher of the Year and Outstanding Support Team Award was given to each School in the University, as well as a Department of the Year.

Nominees for the school also included Psychology colleagues Anne Emerson and Viv Brunsden.



## Societies

Run by our students for students, there are over 70 special-interest societies with everything from art and Amnesty International to politics and poker.

The Social Science-focused societies include Psychology, Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Criminology and Forensics.

This edition introduces the Politics Society.

### Introducing the... Politics Society

The Politics Society is one of the most vibrant, exciting societies around. Whether you are a Politics student or not, take a minute of your time to become a member

and we promise you that you won't regret it. This year will be one of the most exciting ever for the Politics Society, as with the 2015 general election approaching, we most certainly won't be short on topics to discuss!

The City of Nottingham has one of the largest student populations in the country. Therefore, when decision makers want to hear a youth perspective, it is to the students of Nottingham they turn. As a result, this academic year you can expect some big, thought-provoking speakers to grace the Society with their presence.

Each and every one of us is unique due to the lives we've lived. By this simple fact alone, we want you to be part of our society! We want to hear from YOU! Politics isn't just about the big policy announcements that we hear on the news. Politics is also about all of the little things that affect each and every one of us in our everyday lives. This society allows you to make your voice heard and if you're not quite ready to do that, you can just listen and learn

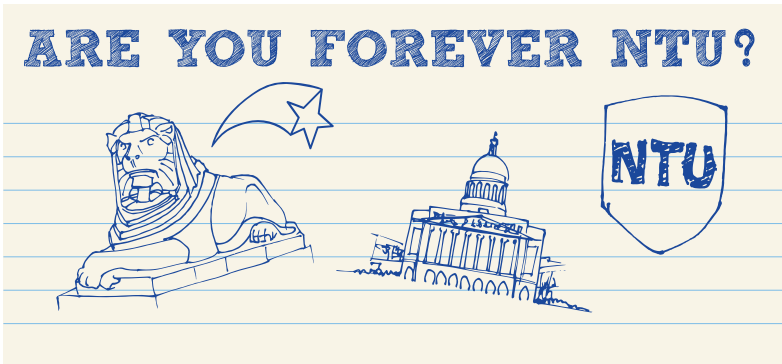
from others – there is sure to be food for thought!

Finally, it isn't just politics we focus on. We also provide some of the best socials on campus. These range from relaxed chats in and around the university to nights out in some of Nottingham's best clubs. We look forward to meeting you!

**Christian Weaver**  
Politics Society President 2014/2015

To find out more and join, visit their Facebook group: search Facebook for **"Nottingham Trent Politics Society"** or follow them on Twitter: **@NTSUPolitics**.

## National Student Survey



Many thanks to everyone who took part in the National Student Survey 2014. Your comments and views will help us shape the future of the School of Social Sciences, informing real change to make the NTU experience even better.

Here's what you think of us...

- 100% of our BA (Hons) Politics and BA (Hons) Youth Studies students were satisfied with their courses.
- 100% of our BA (Hons) Social Work students felt that staff have made the subject interesting.

- 97% of BA (Hons) International Relations students agree that staff are good at explaining things.
- 97% of our BSc (Hons) Psychology students think that their course is intellectually stimulating.
- 93% of students from the School of Social Sciences would recommend studying at Nottingham Trent University to others.
- 90% of BA (Hons) Sociology students think that their course is intellectually stimulating.

National Student Survey, 2014

## Applied Social Sciences Conference 2014

As part of their 'Theory and Application to Mental Health' module, students on the MSc Psychological Wellbeing & Mental Health and MSc Forensic Mental Health courses conducted research on behalf of a number of external organisations, exploring the consultancy stimuli using enquiry-based learning.

**"It was a highly challenging and rewarding experience."**

### MSc Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health student Pradeep Singh

They presented their findings at a PechaKucha-style conference to which organisational representatives were invited. External organisations

included MUTED (a mental health charity); Raphael Healthcare (a secure hospital); Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service; Housing, Care and Support (an academic journal); and Pre Retirement Consultant Services (a training company).

The organisations were thrilled with the students' work and have already spread the word to other organisations who will join them in commissioning research stimuli next year.

PechaKucha is a presentation style that only allows 20 slides or images to be shown for a maximum of 20 seconds each. Originally invented by architects in Tokyo, the format is designed to keep presentations concise and fast paced.

Students described the PechaKucha and conference as one of their favourite assessments. MSc Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health student Pradeep Singh said, "it was a highly challenging and rewarding experience."

## Dr Rose Gann's new role on PSA executive committee

Dr Rose Gann has been elected onto the Political Studies Association (PSA) of the UK's Executive Committee for three years commencing June 2014.

Dr Gann was co-opted onto PSA's Executive Committee in September 2013 for one year, as a co-opted member of the Education and Skills sub-committee, with a remit to explore ways in which the professional body could encourage greater engagement with undergraduate students. As part of this role, Dr Gann visited colleagues in the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Washington in February this year and has since been working on a project to launch an annual national

Politics and International Relations undergraduate research conference.

Recently, nine candidates stood for election onto the Executive Committee where four elected trustee places had become available. Dr Gann was one of the successful candidates and has now been asked to step into the role of chairing the Education and Skills sub-committee. This will involve a much wider brief than her co-opted role this year, including: overseeing the newly developed A-level/sixth-form teachers' group, ensuring that the PSA is represented in consultation groups with examination bodies over the proposed reforms of the Government and Politics A-level

curriculum, continuing the PSA's remit to develop and enhance quantitative methods in the teaching of Politics via quantitative methods initiatives, overseeing a range of training and conferences and events for sixth-form teachers, developing links with PSA alumni, supporting the PSA's graduate network, developing new initiatives to engage Politics undergraduate students, supporting the PSA teaching and learning specialist group and leading on PSA involvement with events being run during Parliament Week.

The School of Social Sciences would like to congratulate Dr Gann on her new role.



## Students work with the BPS

Holly Walton, one of our undergraduate Psychology students, has been busy working with the British Psychology Society (BPS) and has helped to organise the BPS Annual Conference which took place in Birmingham in May.

The three-day student conference included high-profile keynote speakers, hot topic sessions, a mix of symposia, oral presentations, workshops and poster presentations. Holly, along with fellow student Sondos Metwally, became involved with the conference after being BPS student reps in the Division of Psychology.

As well as being a BPS rep, Holly was involved with the BPS student committee in which she attended meetings with other students from different universities and discussed issues affecting student members of the BPS and undergraduate courses.

Through this, Holly took on the role of assistant Psych-Talk editor. In this role, Holly guided students publishing their work in the magazine and edited articles alongside other students. It was being the Psych-Talk assistant editor that first got Holly invited to the conference to represent the magazine and answer any questions about it.

Holly had also been invited to the conference to present the results of her research assistantship awarded by the BPS for her research with Viv Brunnsden and Mhairi Bowe. Her research, which focused on 'The role of places on identity continuity, memory and wellbeing for older individuals,' was also extended to individuals with dementia for her third-year dissertation. Holly had also presented this research at the British Conference for Undergraduate Research in April.

Holly comments, "Both experiences have been fantastic opportunities for me, and I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the BPS, through being a BPS rep and the opportunities that have come with it."

The School of Social Sciences would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Holly on graduating with a First Class BSc (Hons) Psychology degree and wish her the best of luck in the future.



## We're in the news!

Since March 2014, staff from within the School have been a trusted source of expert opinion in more than 120 national and international news items. This figure is on top of all the coverage achieved in specialist and local outlets.

This coverage has ranged from an article by Mike Sutton on how Darwin may have stolen the idea of natural selection, to Phil Barnyard's study on the effect failure has on football fans.

To read more news stories within the School of Social Sciences, please visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/s3News](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/s3News)





# European democratic politics in CRISIS

We are becoming quite familiar with (if not somewhat de-sensitised to) repeated warnings that young people in Britain are increasingly disillusioned with democratic politics, rejecting the institutions of national government, and leaving British democracy in a state of relative crisis as a consequence.

In particular, this youth generation is often singled-out for critical attention – condemned either for their declining presence at the ballot booths or for their active participation in recent high-profile student protests and youth-led occupations of public spaces in major cities across the country.

But the apparent rupture between citizens and the institutions of democratic governance is not an exceptionally “British” issue, and nor is it a uniquely “youth” one. Recent trends across Europe indicate that people of all ages and in all countries seem less committed to national political systems and mainstream political parties, and increasingly susceptible to radical parties and to their rhetoric. They also appear to be deeply sceptical of governments and of the political classes in general<sup>1</sup>.

The recent European Assembly elections are a case in point. In May of this year, nearly 400 million EU citizens in 28 countries were invited to vote for candidates to represent them, yet only 42% opted to do so – the lowest turnout since direct elections were first held 30 years ago.

Furthermore, in many countries, significant numbers of people turned their backs on traditional and mainstream parties, choosing instead to vote for anti-EU/anti-system parties<sup>2</sup>. Close to home, the anti-EU UKIP topped the poll with 27% of the UK vote. Across the continent, anti-immigration and far-right parties made significant advances in countries like Greece and Denmark, while the Front National in France claimed victory over its rivals. Meanwhile, left and leftist anti-system parties rejecting austerity and neoliberalism scored impressive results in countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal.

## Europe’s youth turning its back on democratic politics?

So what about Europe’s youth? To what extent are young people disengaging from national and European democratic processes and institutions? There is much evidence suggesting a decline in the participation of Europe’s youth in traditional forms of political engagement such as voting and joining political parties, and in their strength of feeling concerning those politicians who have been elected to positions of power ostensibly to represent them in national and European parliaments<sup>3</sup>.

However, while there has been a decrease in the engagement of youth in “traditional” democratic practices, further analysis of youth participation unveils a complex landscape of different types of informal and formal participation and civic engagement. For example, there is emerging evidence that young people’s engagement in

participation activities contributes to their sense of being European and their connection with Europe.

A survey of participants of the EU’s Youth in Action Programme (YiA) (2007-2013)<sup>4</sup> found that 73% of youth participants felt more European because of their involvement in YiA activities. Over 500,000 young people were involved in YiA activities, so this could potentially have a significant impact on the experiences of young people and their sense of European citizenship. Additionally, a cross-European study with eight different study sites of 18-24 year olds found that a link between active citizenship at local and national level had a positive impact on young people’s self-identification as European citizens<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, the decline in traditional political participation is more complex than a simple rejection of traditional participatory practices. It could also illustrate the growing centrality of new forms of participation that are “less institutionalised and more flexible” such as anti-globalisation protests and boycotting activities<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, there are many different spaces in which youth participation occurs. These range from formal participatory spaces such as youth parliaments and youth councils, through to demanded participatory spaces in which people act in their own right. Formal participatory spaces may be limited in that they are often based on adult democratic institutions; they may therefore have the effect of inhibiting the involvement of young people who do not, or will not, conform to adults’ expectations of behaviour or interactions.

Furthermore, the most active young participants are not representative of the general youth population, and tend to be those from higher socio-economic groups and with higher levels of education

attainment. However, benefits of such provided participatory spaces include greater access to policy-makers for involved young people, increased dialogue and relations between adults and young citizens, and a perception of youth as “part of the solution and not part of the problem”<sup>7</sup>.

Elsewhere, some young Europeans are engaged in non-traditional forms of political participation in demanded spaces (such as activism, boycotting and protests), and many are moving towards new forms of civic engagement rather than the complete rejection of traditional democratic practices.

In recent years, young people from Europe and beyond were actively engaged in creating or re-thinking democracy. In many regions, young people share a widespread feeling of alienation from politics and exclusion from society which leads to either well-argued protests such as the 15-M Movement or to riots driven by anger and despair.

This participation of young people in what might be perceived as anti-establishment actions (such as anti-war rallies and anti- or alter-globalisation movements) demonstrate that young people are not apathetic about political participation and civic responsibility. Instead, these participatory actions can form the basis of new cultures of political participation and the reinforcement of civil society.

Recent demonstrations and street protests can also be understood as a form of dissident citizenship where young people register their anger with the state outside of formal democratic practices - as in recent protests (May 2014) concerning the presence of a strong ‘right-ist’ element in the newly elected European Parliament.

## Conclusion

European democracy is in a relatively poor state of health.

Citizens of all ages, and young citizens in particular, are clearly disenchanted with the formal institutions, practices, performance and outcomes of European democracy. But it is too simplistic to take from these trends that young Europeans are politically apathetic, with no interest in democratic politics. They may not vote in large numbers at national and European assembly elections – and where they do vote, they be more interested in anti-system parties rather than in the mainstream traditional parties – but they are active observers of the democratic political scene. In many cases they are interested in seeking ways to participate in different forms of political action that match their democratic means, needs and aspirations.

**Matt Henn**

Division of Politics and International Relations  
Nottingham Trent University

**Darren Sharpe**

Institute of Health and Human Development at the University of East London

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# Addicted to **sunshine** - Does '**tanorexia**' really exist?

If the many media reports are to be believed, a new study just published in the journal *Cell* claims that "sunshine can be addictive like heroin". In an experiment carried out on mice, a research team led by Dr. Gillian Fell at the Harvard Medical School in Boston (US) reported that ultraviolet exposure leads to elevated endorphin levels (endorphins being the body's own 'feel good' endogenous morphine), that mice experience withdrawal effects after exposure to ultraviolet light, and that chronic ultraviolet causes dependency and 'addiction-like' behaviour.

Although the study was carried out on animals, the authors speculated that their findings may help to explain why we love lying in the sun and that in addition to topping up our tans, sunbathing may be the most natural way to satisfy our cravings for a 'sunshine fix' in the same way that drug addicts yearn for their drug of choice.

Reading the findings of this new study took me back to 1998 when I appeared as a 'behavioural addiction expert' on Esther Rantzen's daytime BBC television show that featured people who claimed they were addicted to tanning (and was dubbed by the

researchers on the programme as 'tanorexia'). I have to admit that none of the case studies on the show appeared to be addicted to tanning at least based on my own behavioural addiction criteria (i.e., salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse) but it did at least alert me to the fact that some people thought sunbathing and tanning was addictive (in fact, the people on the show said their excessive tanning was akin to nicotine addiction).

There certainly appeared to be some similarities between the people interviewed and nicotine addiction in the sense that the 'tanorexics' knew they were significantly increasing their chances of getting skin cancer as a direct result of their risky behaviour but felt they were unable to stop doing it (similar to nicotine addicts who know they are increasing the probability of various cancers but also feel unable to stop despite knowing the health risks).

Since then, tanorexia has become a topic for scientific investigation. For instance a 2006 study, published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* by Dr. Mandeep

Kaur and colleagues, reported that frequent tanners (those who tanned 8-15 times a month) that took an endorphin blocker normally used to treat drug addictions (i.e., naltrexone) significantly reduced the amount of tanning compared to a control group of light tanners.

A 2005 study published in the *Archives of Dermatology* by Dr. Molly Warthan and colleagues claimed that a quarter of the sample of 145 "sun worshippers" would qualify as having a substance-related disorder if ultraviolet light was classed as the substance they crave. Their paper also reported that frequent tanners experienced a "loss of control" over their tanning schedule, and displayed a pattern of addiction similar to smokers and alcoholics.

A 2008 study published in the *American Journal of Health Behavior* by Dr. Carolyn Heckman and colleagues reported that 27% of 400 students they surveyed were classified as "tanning dependent". The authors claimed that those classed as being tanning dependent had a number of similarities to substance use, including (i) higher prevalence among youth, (ii) an initial perception that the behavior is image enhancing, (iii) high health

risks and disregard for warnings about those risks, and (iv) the activity being mood enhancing.

Another just published study by Dr. Heckman and her colleagues in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* surveyed 306 female students and classed 25% of the respondents as 'tanning dependent' based upon a self-devised tanning dependence questionnaire. The problem with this and most of the psychological research on tanorexia to date is that almost all of the research is carried out on relatively small convenience samples using self-report and non-psychometrically validated 'tanning addiction' instruments.

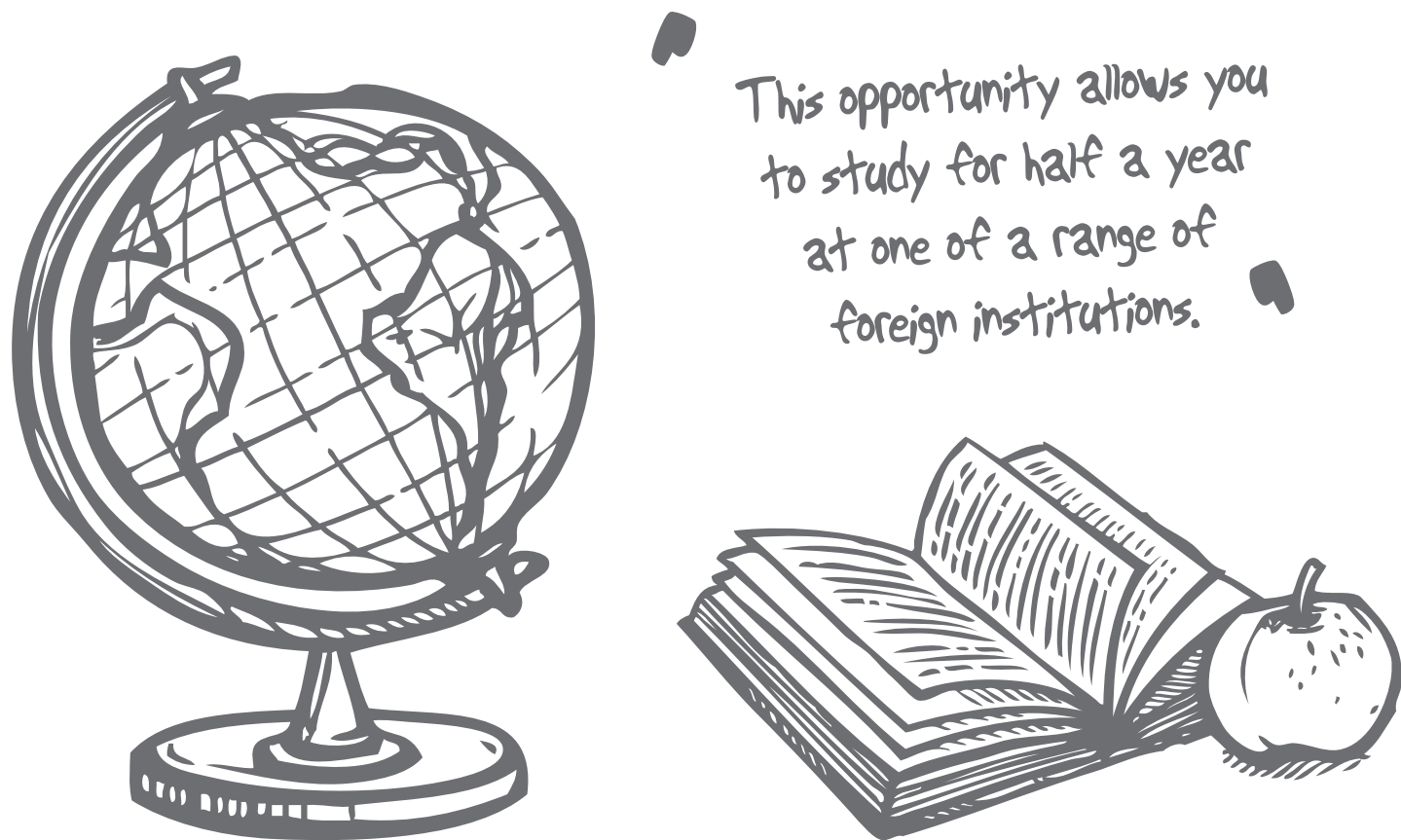
Based on my own six criteria of behavioural addiction although some studies suggest some of these criteria appear to have been met, I have yet to be convinced that any of the published studies to date show genuine addiction to tanning (i.e., that there is evidence of all my criteria being endorsed) but that doesn't mean it's not theoretically possible.

**Mark Griffiths**  
School of Social Sciences at  
Nottingham Trent University



## Erasmus exchange

The School of Social Sciences offers the Erasmus foreign exchange programme which provides students with an opportunity to study abroad.



If you are studying a Politics or International Relations undergraduate course you will complete the first year as normal, then progress to the second year where you study at Nottingham Trent University from October to December for the first term. Then in January or February, you go abroad to a European university until May or June. The final year is then completed at NTU.

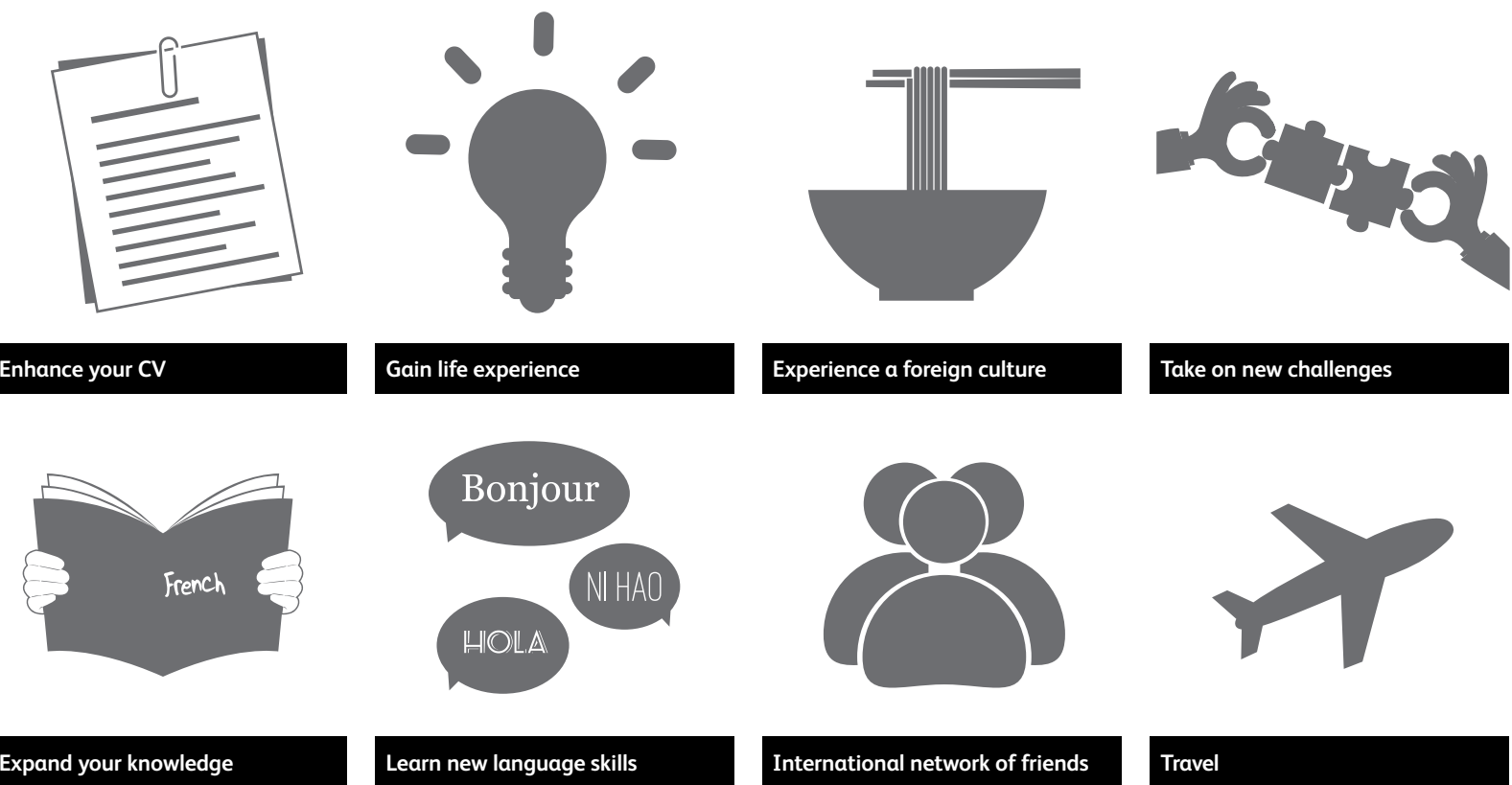
Teaching is in English and credits achieved at a European university or institution will count towards your final degree.



If you are studying an undergraduate Psychology course you will be able to apply to take part in the exchange programme early on in your first year. You will study abroad for a year between Year Two and Year Three and it would involve extending the course length to four years.

## Why study abroad?

There is a wide variety of benefits to studying abroad, including the opportunity to:



Find out more about study abroad opportunities at [www.ntu.ac.uk/s3studyabroad](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/s3studyabroad)

## Partner universities

If you are studying a Politics or International Relations course you may be able to study in places such as:



- Corvinus in Budapest, Hungary
- Lille in France
- Metropolitan University in Prague
- Izmir University in Turkey

\*These universities are subject to change. Different options might be available on a year-by-year basis.



# Teaching Exchanges

Students aren't the only people at NTU who can experience an Erasmus exchange. Thanks to European Union agreements, academic staff members have the opportunity to experience and enrich their academic lives in other cultures. Senior Psychology Lecturers Thomas Dunn and Preethi Premkumar spent their training mobility at the University of Barcelona and the University of Madrid, respectively. Here they reflect upon their experiences:

**Thomas Dunn**  
**Home university:** Nottingham Trent University  
**Destination university:** University of Barcelona

I chose to partake in the Erasmus teaching exchange as I felt experiencing lecturing in another university would augment my teaching at NTU. Having been at NTU for a number of years I felt it would be valuable to build connections with other universities with the particular aim of widening potential international research collaborations.

I chose the University of Barcelona because it has an excellent international reputation for high quality research and I also had prior connections with a member of staff there (they had previously come to NTU on a similar Erasmus exchange). Additionally, the university was located in the cultural city of Barcelona – need I say more.

As part of the exchange, I undertook a short lecture series comprising five lectures for Psychology and Social Policy students across years two to four of their undergraduate degree. The main objective of the lectures was to advocate the value of quantitative methods in the social sciences. The teaching exchange was coordinated to take place collaboratively with a colleague from Birmingham City University, who presented a complementary lecture series on mixed methods in the Social Sciences – which worked really well. While it was quite hard work, not just delivering the lectures but things like finding my way around the university, getting off at the right Metro stop, and making use of my GCSE Spanish, it was well worth it.

It was great to see how other universities outside the UK do things (both structurally and research-wise). I learnt a great deal about how the University of Barcelona approaches degree-level teaching provision, student engagement, and general academic life. It was also a good opportunity to make connections with other researchers and lecturers. Overall, I would highly recommend the Erasmus teaching mobility exchange.



**Preethi Premkumar**  
**Home university:** Nottingham Trent University  
**Destination university:** University of Madrid

I went on a two week Erasmus staff mobility training programme to Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in May 2014. This involved learning to apply principal component analysis (PCA) to brain event-related potentials (ERP) from Professor Luis Carretié and staying on campus in a nice newly-built self-catering apartment.

Professor Carretié is a well-known neuroscientist in the field of emotional attention. His work is highly cited and he publishes in journals that focus on the latest advances in neuroscientific methods, such as Neuroimage. My own research concerns the neural processing of social interactions, therefore it seemed meaningful to forge this research collaboration.

I had some ERP data that I had previously collected and was able to take this to the training and apply PCA to my own data. I found the two weeks hugely beneficial as I was able to obtain interesting results. More importantly, I found the environment stimulating, as Luis' team of researchers was highly motivated. I was able to build a good rapport with the team through shared lunchtimes, taking part in their experiments and various discussions about the team's research experiences. However, I also had long periods of hearing Spanish without understanding any of it! Luis was an excellent mentor, as he gave very clear guidance at a measured pace that allowed me to achieve my goals without feeling pressured. We have planned to continue the research collaboration.

I was also lucky to make good use of the fine weather and go on a guided sight-seeing tour of Madrid by one of the researchers that included visiting an ancient Egyptian temple, the Temple of Debod, donated by the Egyptian Government to Spain. I also visited Segovia, a World Heritage town close to Madrid, and savoured the fantastic Spanish cuisine. Overall, I found the Erasmus staff mobility scheme a great avenue for professional development and global exchange.



# It's not all one-way

Nottingham Trent University also welcomes staff through the scheme, and Dr. Olatz Lopez-Fernandez from the University of Barcelona made the most of the opportunity to come and work with the School of Social Sciences. Here she discusses her reasons behind choosing Nottingham Trent University:

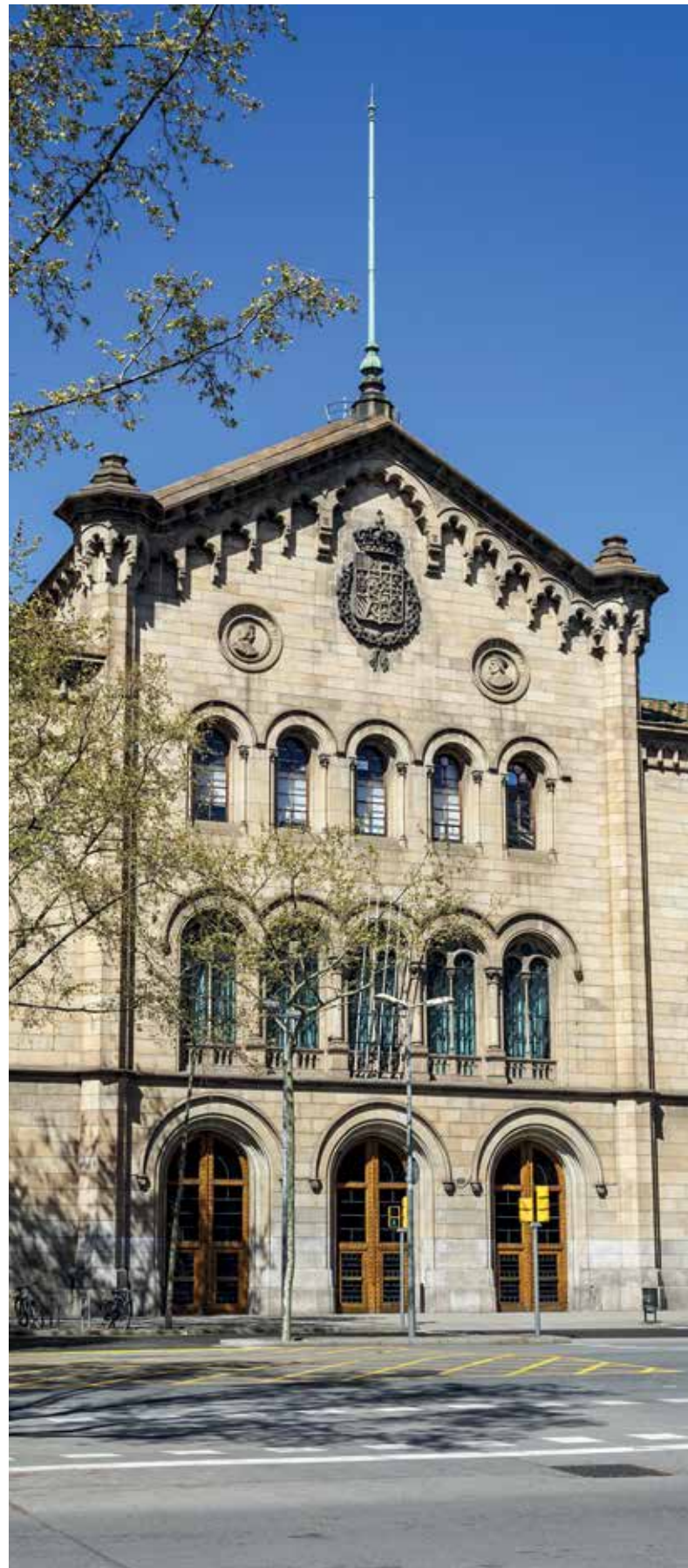
**Dr Olatz Lopez-Fernandez**  
**Home university:** University of Barcelona  
**Destination university:** Nottingham Trent University

Erasmus visits provide the opportunity to be immersed in similar research tasks that you usually do in your own institution but in another European country. I think it's an easy bridge to explore a new higher education environment to learn from others in another context, strengthening the links between people and institutions.

I chose to get involved as I wanted to carry out research with Professor Mark Griffiths, one of the most well-known researchers in the behavioural addiction field. I had the opportunity to come thanks to two complementary forms of financial help, one from the University of Barcelona and another in the form of an EU grant. I had the opportunity to teach and get involved with research. This was an enjoyable experience which gave me the chance to learn about UK higher education through the Psychology Division lecturers and all the courses it offers.

This experience has highlighted the cultural differences between the UK and Spain, both in language and, above all, academically. For example, there are differences in infrastructure, from what I've seen at other organisations compared to how the Psychology Division and the Graduate School operate. In teaching, I was able to attend the classes in addictions and I also gave a seminar on internet and gaming addiction. I was able to work on research papers with Professor Griffiths, who also supervised me in technological addictions. Finally, I got to know many people and enjoyed some really good moments.

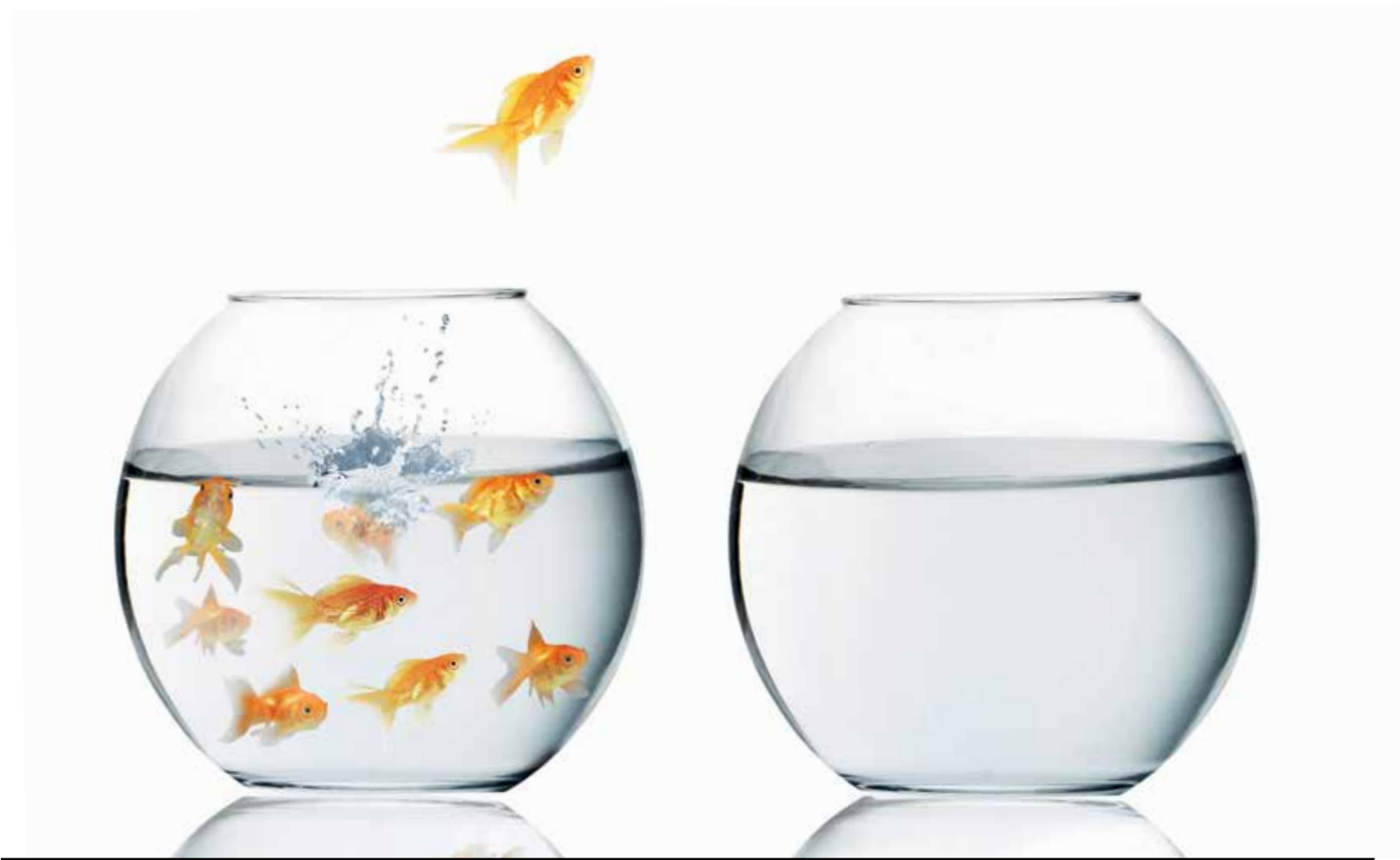
The environment has been academically exciting and is set in a pleasant and peaceful city campus that is modern and easy to handle. I think the Erasmus programme has a lot to offer and through it we can improve our knowledge together.





# Demystifying student employability

As you get closer to completing your studies and start to think about your future career, you may realise that employability is a big thing, perhaps much bigger than you originally thought.



But is employability an add-on to your core studies or something that you already have more of than you probably think? The current focus on employability is a relatively recent phenomenon which is not localised to the UK.

Across Europe and the developed world, a paradox has been noted: “the youth employment rate stands at 23% while there are around 2 million unfilled vacancies across Europe, and a high number of employers cannot find the right mix of skills in the job market.”<sup>1</sup>

A need has arisen to align graduates’ knowledge and skills to employers’ needs. As a result, many have posed the question: how employable are our graduates and how can we boost their employability?

But what is employability really? Is completing a degree not good enough evidence that you have skills and knowledge in a specific area?

Is it not enough to secure a job? And why is this thing called employability putting additional pressure on you when you could be enjoying your studies and your student life?

In this short exposé, we cut through the hype around student employability and suggest that it involves ‘repackaging’ a student’s skills and abilities in a way that demonstrates clearly that the student is employable.

Obviously, completing an undergraduate degree to a good standard will immediately make you more employable. Gaining practical experience or specialising in that area at postgraduate level will further boost your appeal. In a global economy that is becoming more competitive, employability seems to have emerged as a buzz word, a door opener, and an essential extra-curricular activity.

The table on the next page shows a rough inter-generational comparison.

For our parents, the situation was roughly as follows:	For us:
1: Complete your undergraduate degree	1: Complete your undergraduate degree
1.5: Possibly, but not necessarily, also do a postgraduate degree which may render you overqualified for some positions	1.5: Be advised to specialise by also doing a postgraduate degree
2: Find a job at entry level	2: At the same time, seek employment or volunteering work to boost your CV
3: Grow into that job and learn through practice how to apply the principles and knowledge gained through your degree in real life.	3: Gain substantial experience on how to apply your topic expertise in practice
	4: Apply for jobs at entry level where there seems to be too much competition already.

The route from completing a degree to entering your chosen career has become much more complex. Being able to apply graduate knowledge in a job situation seems to be an additional stage from education to graduate employment, an add-on requirement at the pre-employment stage, rather than a consequence of graduate entry into employment.

But there is a different perspective that values what you have already gained or are gaining through your degree. First, let’s go one step back and examine the elements of learning and the difference between education and training or learning.

Education is a process that emphasises abstract and general knowledge and represents the basic preparations for adult life in a specific environment. It is broad and not specific to one type of activity. On the contrary, training is a more short-term, job-specific form of education, focusing on a specific type of activity. Training is typically based on fundamental knowledge and broader skills gained through education, should result in a sustained change in behaviour, and is a result of experience.

And here is the crux of the alternative perspective: in practice, the distinction between education and training has fuzzier boundaries. Although purists who hold specific views on the mission of education may wish for a clear-cut distinction (our parents), reality (our generation) tells us otherwise. This is because of a process called learning transfer, or “the ability of a learner to successfully apply the behaviour, knowledge, and skills acquired in a learning event to the job, with a resulting improvement in job performance.”<sup>2</sup>

For our parents, training and learning transfer would typically take place on the job. For us, the ability to apply at graduate entry level the attitudes, concepts, roles, and skills that are part of training and learning transfer is essential. Learning transfer is moving closer to education (how this happens and the morals of this is a different matter). But what does this have to do with employability?

Employability is about demonstrating that you have not only the topic knowledge and expertise related to a specific field but also the skills and ability to apply that knowledge in real-life job situations. You may have more of the latter than you think.

In our experience, students often sell themselves short when preparing for employment, drafting their CVs, or introducing themselves to potential employers. Below is a reminder of how completing your degree makes you more employable\*.

1. Supervised work experience may be part of your course. Because work experience is a feature of the majority of courses at NTU, this can take a range of forms. In the Division of Psychology, for example, every student will have been involved in either the Professional Practice module, or the Work-Based Psychology Practice module, or a sandwich placement.

2. You already have a great experience base to link your learning to. Think about any paid or voluntary work or any position of responsibility that you have held, which can be directly or indirectly related to your course.

3. Your lecturers have highlighted how the theory they have covered in class can be applied in practice. This may have been done in subtle and unnoticeable ways. Of course it helps that the social sciences overall are about solving real-life problems and improving peoples’ lives.

4. You have or will have had, by the end of your degree, completed an applied research project. Through this you can demonstrate how you can apply the knowledge and skills that you learned as part of your degree in the real world.

5. NTU has strong links with professional organisations and local businesses. In all likelihood you will have, directly or indirectly, benefited from opportunities to use these links. The School Employability team operates in direct and subtler ways.

Of course, expertise also develops with experience, and there is no substitute for the role of time in helping knowledge to become crystallised, better organised, more accessible and actionable. There are also a few things that your degree cannot assist with, including your self-efficacy, motivation, and goal orientation. Beyond these personal attributes, employability is about building on the resources that are already available to you and understanding where you stand in relation not to others, but to your own potential.

Employability is more about reflecting on what you have already learned through your degree and identifying your uniqueness, and less about developing additional skills. In our experience, students tend to underestimate their knowledge and abilities. Self-realisation takes time but it is possible to speed it up.

Dr Maria Karanika-Murray  
Psychology Lecturer

\*This list relates to Nottingham Trent University and specifically the School of Social Sciences, not UK Higher Education in general, as students’ experiences and educational provision across universities may differ widely.

Bibliography

1. <http://epthinktank.eu/2014/03/26/are-universities-fostering-graduate-employability/>

2. [www.trainingmag.com/improving-learning-transfer](http://www.trainingmag.com/improving-learning-transfer)

## Our career events

All current students and graduates from the School of Social Sciences are invited to a series of workshops specifically designed to help you discover your employment opportunities with a Social Sciences degree.

The workshops also provide guidance on making career plans, the current job market, finding job vacancies, putting together CVs and applications and developing those all-important interview skills.

To find out more, visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events)



# Our upcoming events include:

## October

**Wednesday 15 October 2014**  
Launch of the Midland Regional Network : Gender, Crime and Justice

The re-launch of the British Society of Criminology (BSC) Midlands Regional Network will take place at Nottingham Trent University on 15 October 2014. The seminar will address the theme of Gender, Crime and Justice. Visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/BSCLaunch](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/BSCLaunch) for more details.

**Wednesday 29 October 2014**  
Placement and Graduate Recruitment Fair 2014

Come and visit our largest annual Recruitment Fair at Nottingham Trent University. Our Placement and Graduate Recruitment Fair provides a fantastic opportunity for you to meet potential employers and find out about placement and graduate opportunities.

## November

**Tuesday 11 November 2014**  
Emergency Services: Themes in Planning, Response and Recovery

This conference will take place on 11 November 2014 at Nottingham Conference Centre. This conference and networking event brings together academics and practitioners to learn about the latest developments, share research and information and to allow the development of opportunities for promoting and initiating future research in the emergency services and emergency management.

## Postgraduate and Professional open evenings

**Wednesday 12 November 2014**  
**Wednesday 28 January 2015**  
**Wednesday 18 March 2015**  
**Wednesday 10 June 2015**

Don't forget that we hold career events throughout the year. To find out more, please look at page 19.

For more information on upcoming events, please visit: [www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/s3events)

# The Sixth Annual Postgraduate Criminology Conference 2014

In August 2014, the School of Social Sciences hosted the Sixth Annual Postgraduate Criminology Conference, which coincided with the 20-year anniversary of the BA (Hons) Criminology course at Nottingham Trent University.

The two-day event took place on 27 and 28 August and welcomed postgraduate students, from all universities, who had a particular interest in criminology. The conference was held in order for students to engage in discussion on emerging research interests in criminology. It provided an excellent opportunity for doctoral students to showcase their research thus far, and engage with fellow students and academics in their field.

Plenary speeches took place from keynote speakers including Dr Nic Groombridge (St Mary's University), and Dr Neil Chakraborti and Dr Lisa Smith (University of Leicester), who all presented their current research projects as well as engaging in a Q&A session.

The conference was also joined by ex-prisoner and prison campaigner,

Ben Gunn. He reminded delegates that academic research is not about studying the world but trying to change it, and encouraged PhD students to ensure that their research has an impact.

Claire De Motte had some advice for anyone studying a PhD. She said:

"At times, the PhD can be a really difficult process, both emotionally and intellectually, and I feel that at times you can lose sight of the original reasons for wanting to pursue a doctorate.

"For me, I think that's why Ben Gunn's final plenary was really significant. He has been positively affected by PhD research and has experienced the difference that good quality postgraduate work can make."

Feedback from delegates has been extremely positive, with compliments paid to the organisation of the event and to NTU for providing a relaxed atmosphere.

To read more, please visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/pgcrimconference](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/pgcrimconference)



# Counter-terrorism research conference

Nottingham Trent University recently hosted the fourth Annual Conference of the British International Studies Association Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group (CSTWG). The conference focused on the intersections between (counter-) terrorism, neoliberalism, and the everyday. It brought together an international network of over 40 scholars working on counter-terrorism research.

To read more, please visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/cstwgconference](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/cstwgconference)

# Ruth Mann guest lecture

Chartered and Registered Forensic Psychologist Dr Ruth Mann, PhD, recently delivered a guest lecture at Nottingham Trent University on the topic "Can prisons reduce reoffending?" and whether they're a successful deterrent.

In the lecture Dr Mann, current Head of Evidence for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), explored the nature and limitations of reoffending figures. She also explored the challenges of rehabilitative programmes, while looking at the evidence for the impact of imprisonment and discussing how criminology and psychology could help reduce reoffending.

Mick Gregson, Head of Psychology, said, "It was a pleasure to host this event. In a thought-provoking lecture, Ruth set out clearly the challenges faced by the prison service and the changes needed if effective rehabilitation is to be achieved and re-offending reduced."

To read more, please visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/canprisonsreducereoffending](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/canprisonsreducereoffending)



# Upcoming Succeed with Social Sciences career events:

All regular clinics are delivered 12 pm – 1 pm.

- CV clinic:**

  - Tuesday 11 November (Chaucer 3121)
  - Tuesday 24 February (Media Suite)
  - Tuesday 21 April (Chaucer 3121)

**Interview techniques and skills:**

  - Tuesday 18 November (Media suite)
  - Tuesday 3 March
  - Tuesday 28 April
- Application forms and personal statements:**

  - Tuesday 25 November (Chaucer 3121)
  - Tuesday 10 March
  - Tuesday 12 May

**Enterprise clinic:**

  - Tuesday 20 January (Chaucer 3121)

We also hold regular School of Social Sciences drop-in sessions every Tuesday from 10 am – 12 pm in Chaucer 3121.

# 31<sup>st</sup> British Psychological Society Cognitive Section Annual Conference, 2014

In September 2014, the 31st BPS Cognitive Section Annual Conference (#CogSec2014) was hosted by the Division of Psychology at NTU.

With more than 160 delegates, from as far away as Australia and Japan, the event had a packed schedule across four days, that included three keynotes, 60 individual papers, seven symposia (40 papers), 40 posters across two poster sessions and a pre-conference workshop. Combined with plenty of food and wine, a Psychological illusionist (Duncan William – [www.magicduncan.com](http://www.magicduncan.com)), great company and interesting discussions, this created a vibrant conference that was deemed a success by all.

Dr Andrew Dunn and Dr Duncan Guest, conference organisers, commented:

"There was a great buzz about the event, helped no doubt by the great facilities and the endless supply of tea, coffee and biscuits!"

Whilst Professor Linden Ball, outgoing Chair of Cognitive Section called it "one of the best BPS cognitive conferences over the past few decades."

We would like to thank everybody who attended and made the conference such a success.

The 2015 conference will be held at the University of Kent. You can find out more by following @BPS Cognitive on twitter or liking them on Facebook.

To read more, please visit: [www.ntu.ac.uk/bpsannualconference](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/bpsannualconference)



# First Annual MENA Conference 2014

In April 2014, Nottingham Trent University hosted the first Middle East and North Africa Research Cluster annual conference, which looked at 'Relocation, Continuity and Transformation in Middle East-Asia Relations'.

The one-day interdisciplinary conference explored the implications of change and transformation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the region's relationship with the major actors in Asia. The conference brought together a network of established scholars along with early-career and postgraduate researchers and featured speakers from the Czech Republic, Germany and Pakistan.

Principal Lecturer at NTU, John Gorry, commented on the "varied and international selection of speakers and participants who spent a useful day exchanging ideas and networking," calling the undertaken debates and conference "first class."

To read more, please visit [www.ntu.ac.uk/menaconference](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/menaconference)





# So...

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