Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Social Sciences research newsletter and as usual I continue to be very proud of the level of research activity that is going on in the School. In this edition we celebrate prizes for psychology, the delivery of conferences and research events across the School as well as Spur project successes. Staff are engaged in contributing to international conferences. We have welcomed international visitors to our School and a number of colleagues are continually active in the national press, and on radio/TV. All of this activity has taken place during the time in this academic session when we were preparing for our Periodic School Review. Feedback from the Dean, Kathie Moore, relating to the Periodic School Review reveals that we had a fantastic outcome that reflects the hard work and commitment across the School. We were commended for our quality enhancement activities which included several of the initiatives such as SPUR where we are clearly linking our research with innovation in teaching and learning.

All of the above successes are timely given that I am in the throes of updating our School's Research Strategy for 2015-16 and beyond. All Schools in the University are being asked to provide updated research plans for the Vice Chancellor and within the plan we need to set out a proposal for investment in our School's research with identified outcomes. This marks a more systematic approach to how research funding and related resources will be distributed across the university.

I will keep you informed of the outcome of the planning process in our next newsletter. In the meantime congratulations to all of you for your continued research successes and for making our School such a vibrant research community.
Research Activity in Politics and International Relations

The Division of Politics and International Relations have been particularly active on the NTU’s Election 2015 blog (see http://ntuelectionexperts2015.com/) with several contributions from Dr Matt Ashton, Dr Sagarika Dutt and Professor Matt Henn. The Divisional Research Series had external papers last term from: Dr Andrew Goffey (University of Nottingham), Dr Erik Nevue (Sciences Po-Rennes), Prof Katherine Adeney (University of Nottingham) and Dr Glyn Daly (Northampton University). We also hosted internal papers from Dr Natalie Martin, Dr Sagarika Dutt, Dr Liam McCarthy, Dr Oli Harrison and Dr Kevin Love.

Dr Imad El-Anis has recently published an article titled ‘Explaining the Behaviour of Small States: An Analysis of Jordan’s Nuclear Energy Policy’ in the Cambridge Review of International Affairs.


Dr Marie Gibert has recently published the following article in a leading French International Relations journal: Marie Gibert (2015), ‘La Cour pénale internationale et l’Afrique, ou l’instrumentalisation punitive de la justice internationale?’, Revue internationale et stratégique (97), pp. 111-118. Following this publication, Marie took part in a 40-minute programme on Radio France Internationale (RFI) that was broadcast on Saturday 2 April and focused on the special issue’s topic, sanctions in international relations. See http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20150404-sanctions-internationales-armes-obama-sissi/.
Professor Matt Henn has had a conference paper accepted for presentation at the European Consortium of Political Research due to take place in Montreal at the end of August. The paper is titled, ‘Resolving uneven generational patterns of citizenship and electoral participation – the impact of institutional changes on youth citizenship, political participation and voting in Britain’. Matt Henn also joined a panel of experts at an event organised by the Birmingham Salon on Thursday 23 April 2015, to consider the question, ‘Apathy in the UK: does the political disengagement of young people threaten the future of democracy?’. This was an open event, with an audience that included students and academics, citizenship practitioners and the general public. Matt Henn also contributed to the UK Political Studies Association’s "Political Insight" blog at http://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/blog/and-winner-is%E2%80%A6-election-abstention. Matt discusses the unpredictability of the election, the volatility of the electorate, and the likely winner of the contest – voter abstention.

Matt recently presented a paper at the annual conference of the Journal of Youth Studies at Copenhagen, 30 March – 1 April. The title of his presentation was, ‘Is compulsory voting the solution to the young citizen-state disconnect?’. Matt has also received an invitation from the University of Valencia to discuss his work on young people and political engagement. Matt will be the main speaker at an event which will include participation from colleagues based at universities across Spain. His presentation will take place on Friday 8 May, the day after the UK General Election. He will therefore have the opportunity not only to report on his research concerning young people and politics (with Dr Nick Foard), but also key results and issues from the election. This invitation follows from networking relationships that are developing following the pre-election conference hosted by the Division of Politics and International Relations in February this year.

Matt Henn’s article (with Dr Nick Foard) for the Journal of Youth Studies, ‘Social differentiation in young people's political participation: the impact of social and educational factors on youth political engagement in Britain’ has been included in an online article collection featuring the top three most downloaded articles that were published and downloaded in 2014 in each Routledge Social Sciences journal. The article is freely available until the 30 June 2015, via the collection homepage here: http://bit.ly/social-sciences-most-read. In addition, Matt’s article for the ‘The Conversation’ (After Greece, the UK is next in line for an electoral shake-up) achieved over 15,500 downloads compared to the average download rate of c. 1,500.

Matt also appeared on BBC radio stations across the country on 5 February, talking about the importance of young people voting in the general election and potential changes to the country’s political make-up if more people voted. The interview was broadcast on BBC Radio West Midlands, BBC Radio Suffolk, BBC Radio Norfolk, BBC Radio Leicester, BBC Radio Leeds, BBC Radio Lancashire, BBC Radio Kent, BBC Radio Humberside, BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester, BBC Radio Guernsey, BBC Radio Essex, BBC Radio Derby, BBC Radio Cornwall, BBC Radio Berkshire and BBC Radio London.

Natalie has also had an article accepted for publication in December 2015 by the *Journal of European Integration History* called ‘How the EU came to open accession negotiations with Turkey: The role of the ‘well-placed Brits’’ and is the joint guest editor - with Dr Gulay Icoz of King's College London - of a special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* on Turkey-EU relations to be published in December 2016. Finally she is due to give a talk to the Oxford University International Relations Society on 6 May as part of publicity for the monograph and will attend the inaugural meeting in London on 14 May of a group of academics aiming to raise the profile of Turkish studies in the UK. In addition **Dr Martin** is preparing a consortium to submit a proposal to Horizon 2020 call INT-09-2015 and has also - jointly with Gulay Icoz - had a panel series accepted for the UACES conference in Bilbao in September.

**Dr Kevin Love** has had a paper accepted for publication in the North American Journal *Janus Head*. Kevin has also been invited to give the keynote address to a conference at Helsinki University, on the 4 and 5 May.
In the last quarter, Dr Duncan Guest has been involved in a range of research related activities. In an article in *Psychology Review*, he had a grown up debate about quantitative and qualitative research methods with NTU’s Dr Nick Blagden. A co-authored paper was accepted by the journal *Management Decision* on “the role of psychological distance in co-creation of value in services” and a co-authored book chapter on *Memory* with NTU’s Professor Thom Baguley and Harriet Smith was published in the recent *Essential Psychology* book produced by NTU’s Division of Psychology. In addition he has submitted several journal articles (to *PlosOne* and the *Journal of Cognitive Psychology*) and submitted revisions of two others (one on perceptual judgement to *Cognitive Psychology* and one with NTU’s Dr Christina Howard on ageing and visual information processing to the *Journal of Vision*). Data collection for a project led by Dr Paula Stacey on audio-visual search has commenced (the project investigates the processes involved when searching an array of faces to determine which one is speaking), as has data collection on a project on visual masking with a colleague at Oxford Brookes. Duncan has also just been awarded some internal money to help facilitate the research of the *Cognition and Perception* research group by trialing software that enables data for some cognitive psychology experiments (those requiring reliable estimates of the time taken to respond to stimuli) to be collected online.
Psychology student Sandy Metwally has been given the prestigious opportunity to exhibit a poster on her research at the British Psychological Society (BPS) annual conference in May this year.

The poster forms part of the work that Sandy undertook during a ten-week studentship, funded by the School of Social Sciences. This took place between her second and third year and involved working as a research assistant.

Sandy's research explored young people's perceptions of cyberbullying, examining how much they thought they were at risk in comparison to their friends, students of their age, younger students, people older than them, and strangers.

The study showed that those with greater knowledge and more experience online were found to have more accurate perceptions of risk, as they showed a lower third-person effect. Across all the young people who took part in this study, it was female respondents who thought they would be more likely to experience cyberbullying.

In her role as research assistant, Sandy was involved in data collection, data analysis and the write up of the report, as well as the creation of the poster. She also had the valuable opportunity to learn additional and more advanced statistical methods, as well as gaining a precious insight into how research is conducted in practice.

Sandy said: "I am both overjoyed and slightly stunned that my poster was accepted at such a prestigious event. I never thought at this age I would be able to present something I had worked on. This opportunity just affirms how valuable schemes like Scholarship Projects for Undergraduate Researchers (SPUR) are."

As well as having her poster displayed at the BPS annual conference, Sandy has also presented her poster at the Houses of Parliament.
A Celebration of Science: The Ig Nobels come to NTU

On Wednesday 18 March, the Division of Psychology in the School of Social Sciences was delighted to welcome the Ig Nobels – A celebration of science to NTU. The programme for this year's event featured Marc Abrahams, organiser of the Ig Nobel Prizes, editor of the Annals of Improbable Research, and Guardian columnist, together with a gaggle of Ig Nobel Prize winners and other improbable researchers. These included: Chris McManus (Ig Nobel winner, Scrotal asymmetry in ancient Sculpture and man); Richard Stephens (Ig Nobel winner, The effect of swearing on pain); Richard Webb (Tribute to John Hoyland, the father of Nominative Determinism).

The event was attended by almost 400 people and proved to be a highly entertaining and enjoyable evening. Phil Banyard, Reader in the Psychology Division and event organiser said: "It was good to see such a mixed audience of staff and students from within NTU and also from Nottingham itself. "The Ig Nobels shows everything that is good in science education – it has interest, inquiry and scepticism and when you add a little humour, you get an excellent evening. You don't expect to hear laughter at a science event, but that's what the Ig Nobels gives you!"

Psychology Division Celebrates Book Launch

On Wednesday 22 April, staff from the Division of Psychology in the School of Social Sciences came together to celebrate the launch of their book – Essential Psychology – which was co-edited and authored by staff within the division.

The book launch provided an excellent opportunity for staff to mark the successes of the past few months and recognise the organisational feat that went into producing a work co-authored by over fifty members of academic staff.

The event took place in Boots Library, where staff were treated to bucks fizz and canapés. Awards were presented for a range of achievements including, the fastest response to a contribution request (Dr. Mark Griffiths) and the strongest stand on principle to resist the editors (Dr. Antonio Castro). Phil Banyard, organiser of the Book Launch and one of the editors of Essential Psychology said: “The event was an acknowledgement of the achievements of the Psychology Division this year and of the way the academic team worked together to produce this introductory text. To toast the success of the Division, glasses of 'Books Fizz' were provided, which added an extra sparkle to the event.”
Ricky Gee delivered his paper ‘Alternative Visions of Employability; the role of critical pedagogy’ at the SRHE New Researchers annual conference, which concentrated on the theme of diversity and plurality within Higher Education. Ricky’s paper was delivered within an Employability panel which consisted of a number of presenters from a number of disciplines, such as engineering, business and nursing. Each of the presentations, including Ricky’s, explored the challenges of meeting the demands of the current employability agenda. Such challenges are appearing to be exacerbated due to the certainties of modern employability practice and underpinning assumptions becoming challenged; particularly agented rational decision theory and strategies, as many commentators argue that modern assumptions simply no longer relate to people’s ‘realities’ and are insufficiently nuanced to deal with ambiguity, e.g. Gelatt (1989), McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich (2001) and Ruppert (2010). Alternative visions were therefore shared among presenters and participants, such as the influence of university culture and outside community upon career enactment, as well as the role of critical pedagogy so as to academically scrutinise reflexive student career narratives. Interesting discussions ensued so as to develop future curricular input for all involved.

Dr Adam Barnard and KTP Associate Catherine Goodall presented a poster at the British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) conference in Edinburgh. They also submitted an article which was recently published in Practice: Social Work in Action titled ‘Approaches to Working with Children and Families: A Review of the Evidence for Practice’. The article is a review of the evidence supporting different approaches which local authorities could take in working with children and families.

Jo Ward has completed a study into the Government’s adoption reforms. This is being prepared for publication and will argue that even if the government’s premise is accepted that more children should be adopted, the approach is target driven and too simplistic to address the complexity of contemporary adoption. Drawing on this work, Jo Ward and Joe Smeeton have had a paper accepted for the International Health, Wellness and Society Conference in Madrid in September, titled ‘The End of Adoption? Adoption as a Means of Promoting the Wellness of Children in the Care of the State’, which will explore the current situation in adoption in England, in the light of conflicting pressures from the Government (pro adoption) and the courts (against). Finally, Joe and Jo have been contracted by local adoption agency Family Care to carry out an investigation into the links between infertility and adoption. This will use infertility websites and chat rooms to contact possible participants for online interviews, as well as face to face interviews with couples experiencing infertility.

Dr Chak-Kwan Chan was invited by Dr Jie Lei of Sun Yat-Sen University (China) to join their conference organising committee and also present a paper at an international conference organised by Sun Yat-Sen University and Bath University in Guangzhou on 16 - 17 September 2015. Dr Chak-Kwan Chan has an edited book in production ‘China’s Social Policy: Transformation and Challenges’. The book aims to examine social policy changes since China’s economic reform in 1978. The book includes three parts. Part one provides readers with basic and essential information about the background and main features of China’s economic reform and the process of its social policy making. Part two concerns the development of the main welfare policies, including social assistance, old age pensions, labour, public health, education, housing and rural policy. The final part deals with special welfare issues that are essential to our understanding of China’s socio-economic changes and the well-being of different social groups.


Graham Whitehead recently published his article ‘Developing enabling environments in practitioner training’ in the Journal of Asia Pacific Counselling and Psychotherapy.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21507686.2014.1002803
Professor Azrini Wahidin gave a paper at Newcastle titled ‘Missing Voices: Women’s involvement in the IRA, Women and War: Ireland in the Twentieth Century’. Azrini also attended the European Network COST Action IS1106 Workgroup and Management Committee in Malta.

In addition, and alongside Dr Linda Moore and Dr Una Convery (University of Ulster), Azrini recently interviewed volunteers, prison staff and prisoners participating in the Quaker Connections befriending project based at HMP Maghaberry. They launched the report at HMP Maghaberry in May.

Azrini has recently published a chapter in ‘Criminal Justice in Transition: The Northern Ireland Context’. Her edited book ‘Research Ethics in Criminology: Dilemmas, Problems and Issues’ co-authored by Loraine Gelsthorpe and Malcolm Cowburn is due for publication soon.


Azrini is presenting her inaugural lecture on the 10 June 2015. The lecture is titled ‘Femininity in Dissent: The Women of Armagh’.

During the conflict in Northern Ireland, the criminal justice system played a central and visible role in containing, managing and repressing social disorder and, hence, became associated indelibly with issues of the state.

Although much has been written about the recent political struggles in Northern Ireland, too often it has been women’s experiences which have been silenced and under explored. This lecture will chart the contours of women’s experiences of imprisonment by contextualising the history of Armagh Prison and the central role it played during the conflict in Northern Ireland.

To reserve a place go to: www.ntu.ac.uk/azriniwahidin
Dr Graham Bowpitt and Simon Howard have received School research funding for a SPUR-type project (Scholarship Projects for Undergraduate Researchers) to provide a bursary for a second year undergraduate to work on an aspect of the Opportunity Nottingham Evaluation. As readers may recall from the September issue of this Newsletter, Opportunity Nottingham (ON) is a Lottery funded project managed by the Framework Housing Association to explore innovatory methods of working with adults who combine homelessness, with mental ill-health, substance misuse and criminality. Graham Bowpitt is engaged in the long-term evaluation of ON, and this bursary will provide a valuable opportunity to explore a key aspect of ON in greater depth.

The bursary will be used by two undergraduates working together to explore the coping strategies used by frontline ON staff who work with some of the most problematic adults in our community and how such understanding might inform training. Staff who work with ON clients are routinely faced with challenging and difficult behaviour, refusal to engage, client relapse and even death through extremely poor health and fractured lifestyles. The bursary students will explore the medium to long term effects of this kind of work on staff and the coping strategies they develop to reduce risk and other adverse effects, to develop personal resilience and to meet the expectations of the ON programme. It is hoped that the project will make evidence based recommendations for providing effective support and meeting training needs.

This project will be of particular interest to students on Social Work and Health and Social Care courses, as it should enhance employability through the acquisition of research skills in an adult social care practice setting and an opportunity to explore a challenging field of practice not normally encountered on social care placements. For more information contact Dr Graham Bowpitt: graham.bowpitt@ntu.ac.uk or Simon Howard: simon.howard@ntu.ac.uk.
Study aims to improve community health worker programme in rural Ugandan district

Crucial health services in a rural Ugandan district are set to be improved as part of a major project getting underway at Nottingham Trent University.

Experts in public health at the University have embarked on an international health partnership which aims to strengthen the community health worker programme in Uganda’s Wakiso District.

Community health workers in the area make a significant contribution to improving people’s health through effective health promotion and primary care work. They are often the first point of contact for people living in rural areas.

But analysis has found a number of challenges linked to their work. These include the absence of clarity about their roles and responsibilities, difficulties in providing the right level of training, supervision and monitoring, poor transport facilities and a lack of basic resources.

Working with academics in the School of Public Health at Makerere University in Uganda, the Nottingham researchers are looking to strengthen the Ministry of Health programme for community health workers, focused on improving their capacity to provide healthcare in the communities they serve.

The revamped training packages will develop the community health workers’ skills and knowledge and strengthen protocols and systems to improve supervision and monitoring. It will also identify and implement factors which can further motivate health workers.

The three year £166,000 project – which builds on previous partnership activities between NTU and Makerere University – also involves partners C3 Collaborating for Health and the Ugandan Ministry of Health.

The work is being funded by the UK Department for International Development’s Health Partnership Scheme, and managed by the Tropical Health and Education Trust.
"The role of community health workers, and the need for universal health coverage in many parts of the world, is critical today," said Dr Linda Gibson, Senior Lecturer in public health in Nottingham the School of Social Sciences.

She said: "A comprehensive ‘bottom up’ approach, where health is delivered within communities, is now recognised as crucial by all the international health agencies. The absence of this approach is tragically demonstrated in those countries currently affected by Ebola, for example.

"We are very excited to be playing a key role in helping to deliver health care which is so needed in this part of the world. The hope is that our project to strengthen the community health worker training programme will eventually be rolled out nationally."

David Musoke, a lecturer at Makerere University School of Public Health, said: "We are delighted to work with Nottingham Trent University on this important project to support the work of community health workers in Uganda. The project will not only strengthen their capacity to perform their roles through enhanced knowledge and skills but also benefit the communities in which they work."

Jane Cockerell, the chief executive of the Tropical Health and Education Trust, said: "The shortage of appropriately trained health workers in low and middle-income countries continues to undermine efforts to improve health services for the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the world.

"Working in partnership with colleagues overseas, the collaboration between NTU and Makerere University School of Public Health will strengthen community health worker training, helping to improve health outcomes for patients.

"The health professionals from Nottingham who volunteer their time, their energy and their expertise, will be responding to a need identified by the developing country partner and will build the long-term capacity of community health workers to improve healthcare for the communities they serve."

Did you know? You can find out more about Dr. Linda Gibson’s work in Uganda by checking out the School of Social Sciences’ Go Global Blog:

ntus3global.wordpress.com
Charity working to prevent sex offending wins prisoner rehabilitation award

A charity created with the help of Nottingham Trent University researchers has won the Robin Corbett Award for Prisoner Rehabilitation 2015.

The Safer Living Foundation, based at HMP Whatton, works with sex offenders in prison and on release into the community to help reduce the risk of reoffending and prevent people becoming victims of sexual harm. It is a unique collaboration between the prison, Nottingham Trent University, National Probation Trust (East Midlands), Nottingham Police, Age UK and Circles UK.

The charity works with adult men with an intellectual disability, those who are elderly and those who have little or no social support. These groups often have complex needs but find it hard to access services in the community and are at particular risk of reoffending on release.

Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is one of the charity's initiatives and is a proven model for working with sex offenders which has delivered an impressive 83% reduction in sexual offending. Each 'circle of support' comprises four to six volunteers drawn from the local community under professional supervision. The circle provides guidance and support to a single offender while holding them accountable for their behaviour.

Uniquely at HMP Whatton, the circle begins six months before a prisoner is released, thus helping to bridge the gap between custody and release. Systematic arrangements for sustained monitoring and support are established in the prison and continue on to approved premises and beyond. The circle works in close collaboration with the police and probation services and contributes to the safe management and supervision of offenders in the community.

Dr Belinda Winder and Helen Elliott, of NTU's Sexual Offences, Crime and Misconduct Research Unit, are co-founders of the Safer Living Foundation – and the charity was established with seed funding from the University's centre for enterprise and entrepreneurship, The Hive.

Dr Winder said: "Working with sex offenders is a humbling experience: you are all too aware of the lives that have been left broken and in ruins as a consequence of offenders' actions, which makes it that much more crucial that you help to rehabilitate these individuals and prevent future victims. As a co-founder of the Safer Living Foundation, I have been extremely proud to be part of the charity's work and, as a psychologist at NTU, I am also delighted to help the charity ensure that every project it conducts is evaluated."

"The Safer Living Foundation is keen to ensure that we know what works, how it works, and how it could work better. It has a perfect mix of professionals contributing their expertise and knowledge and making a real difference in society. Receiving this prestigious award reaffirms that people who are experts in the field of penal reform value what we are doing."

The award was presented to the winners by Lady Corbett at a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group in the Houses of Parliament on 4 March.
Second Annual Middle East and North Africa Conference

The Division of Politics and International Relations held the second annual Middle East and North Africa research cluster conference on Thursday 9 April 2015. The conference, titled ‘Regional Integration vs National Disintegration in the Post-Arab Spring MENA’, explored the processes of change currently shaping the Middle East and North Africa.

The national and transnational challenges that have emerged since the uprisings in 2011 that are commonly referred to as ‘the Arab Spring’ – in particular the increase in extremism, and the emergence and intensification of civil wars – have garnered significant attention in both media coverage and academic research. However, simultaneous (and far older) processes of regional integration – in varying forms - from free trade agreements like the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, to economic and political union like the Gulf Cooperation Council, have also been influenced by the changes of the past four years. This conference brought together research from different fields to explore how far the changes shaping the MENA are leading to the region’s polarisation between states that are integrating politically and economically with each other on the one hand and states that are disintegrating internally on the other.

The conference brought together academics and practitioners from institutions around the world and from different fields, including Politics, International Relations, International Political Economy, Middle Eastern Studies and Global Studies. In addition to universities around the UK, including the University of Leeds, Oxford University, and King’s College London, delegates came from the Czech Republic, Greece, India, Iran, Norway, Turkey, the UAE, and the USA.
There were twenty five papers in total delivered on eight panels as follows: Greece, India, Iran, Norway, Turkey, the UAE, and the USA. A number of PhD candidates and academics at NTU also presented. There were twenty five papers in total delivered on eight panels as follows:

- Civil War, Terrorism and Ideology
- Understanding the Transformative Effects of the Arab Spring
- Economic Integration, Political Cooperation and Institutions in the MENA
- Turkey Reframed: regional challenges and foreign policy responses
- The Political Economy of Aid, Civil Society and Solidarity in the MENA
- Understanding Regional and Global (Dis)Integration
- Old Game, New Game: Interventionism in the MENA
- Structural Change, Revolution and (In)Stability in the Modern MENA

The MENA research cluster is following up on this conference by submitting a number of special issue proposals containing the papers presented to *Turkish Studies, Mediterranean Politics, Middle East Policy, and the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Overall, the papers presented a number of policy recommendations for governments and other stakeholders within the region and elsewhere.

**Citizens, Parties and Political Action: Political Participation in the UK General Election 2015 Conference**

On Wednesday 4 February, the Division of Politics and International Relations hosted the Citizens, parties and political action: Political participation and the UK General Election 2015 conference.

The conference, which was organised by the newly established Citizens, Parties and Political Action research cluster, explored developments in party politics and unfolding and uneven patterns of citizens’ political participation in the UK and elsewhere across Europe.

The conference included panels that focused on changes in party politics and the emergence of new parties across the UK and Europe and the challenges of class, ethnicity, gender and age–based political participation inequalities.
The conference culminated in a roundtable session, comprising national speakers as well as representatives from political parties. This addressed a question of crucial significance for the future health of UK democracy: Should 16 and 17-year-olds be given the vote? Speakers at the roundtable event included prospective parliamentary candidates from across Nottinghamshire and individuals involved in youth citizenship and youth politics.

Professor Matt Henn, from the Division of Politics and International Relations said: "The Division of Politics and International Relations were delighted to host this conference which brought together colleagues from across Europe to discuss the current state of health of democratic politics across the continent.

"Three panels considered the vulnerability of traditional and mainstream political parties to challenges from newer left, right and populist parties, as well as the deepening disconnect between citizens and formal politics which seems to be a feature of many advanced democratic countries.

"The afternoon roundtable included a panel of parliamentary candidates and national speakers who offered responses to a question of increasing and considerable importance as we look toward this year's UK General Election and beyond: Should 16 and 17-year-olds be given the vote?

"This session attracted more than 50 participants and led to an exciting debate about the possibilities and prospects for bridging the persisting rift between young citizens and the state. Almost inevitably, no single position was agreed, although all were left much the wiser and more informed than they were at the outset."

Following from the conference, Dr Jose Pavia from the University of Valencia will now be visiting the Division of Politics and International Relations this summer to collaborate on a new research project. As part of this developing research relationship, Matt Henn has been invited to present his research in Valencia on 7 May.
Dates for your diary

Spring bank holiday - 25 May
Examinations (four week block) - 11 May – 5 June
End of academic year - 5 June
Clear weeks to Graduation week - 6 weeks
Graduation - 20 - 24 July
Examinations - 1 September – 11 September
Welcome Week - 25 September
Term One starts (10 weeks UG and PG) - 5 October

Next issue: July 2015

If you wish to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter, then please contact Claire de Motte: claire.demotte@ntu.ac.uk.