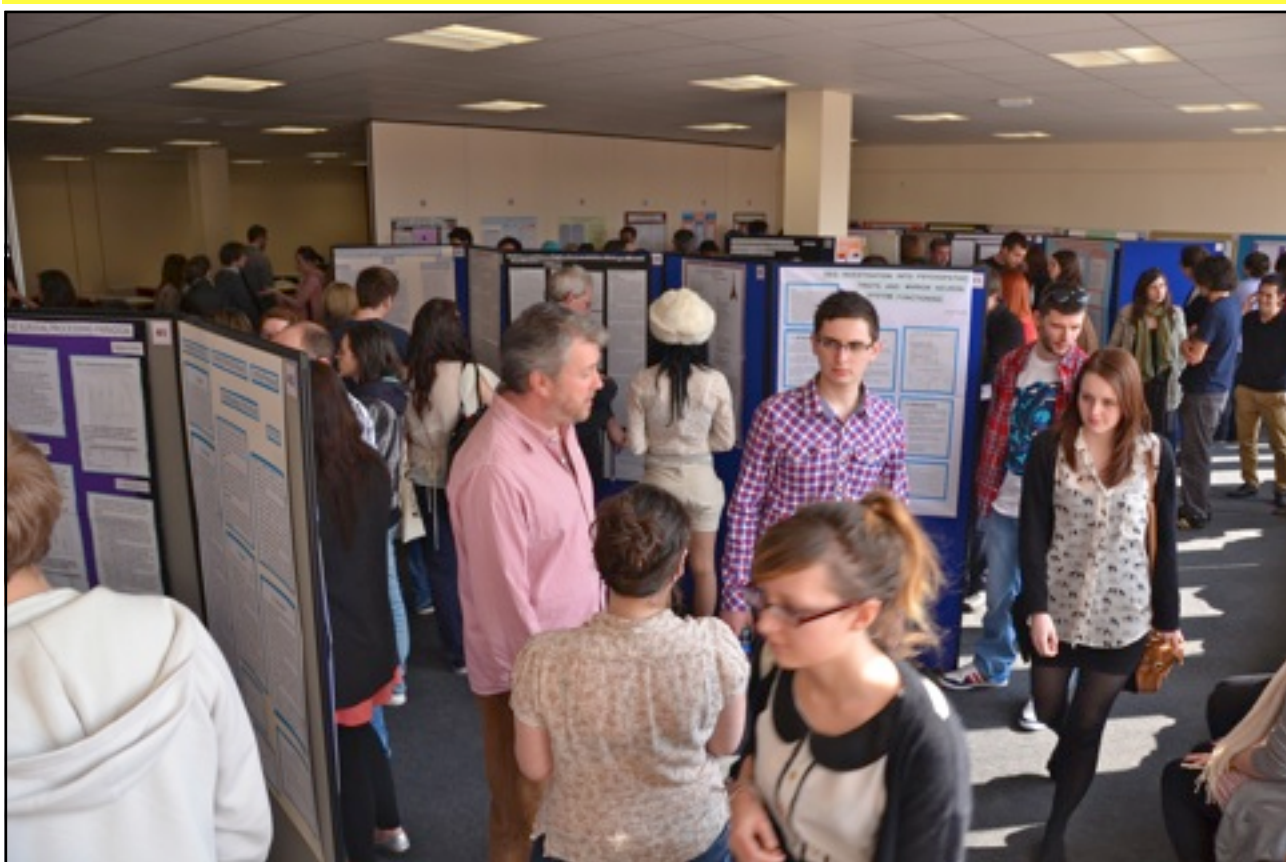


Department of Psychology

Welcome back!

The final term of this academic year has just started and everyone is busy revising and preparing for upcoming exams. We wish all of our students the best of luck with their exams! Happy summer term everyone!



Poster Day 2012

by Shannon Jackman

The poster presentation day is an occasion in which students and staff can get together and review the results of the third year final year (PS300) projects. It was a wonderful day with many people from within and outside of the department dropping by. The aim of the Poster presentation is for students to summarise the aims, methodology and results of their PS300 projects in poster format. Many of you have no doubt seen some of the posters located around the department from precious poster sessions. So if you get the opportunity, go and have a look at some of the projects from previous years. You can also view the pictures from this years poster presentation on our website: http://www.essex.ac.uk/psychology/department/events/poster_day_2012.html

British Psychological Society Undergraduate Conference: first hand account with Essex Psychology Students Le An and Espen Sjoberg

by Shannon Jackman



The picture on the left shows 3rd year student Espen Sjoberg during his presentation in Glasgow.

In the previous edition, we announced that An Le and Espen Sjoberg would present the findings from their PS300 projects at the BPS undergraduate conference in Glasgow. I had a chat with them to find out how they got on.

What is the BPS conference?

Le: BPS conference is an event arranged by the British Psychological Society, where final year Psychology students are invited to attend and present their projects, and to check out research conducted by fellow students.

How did you get involved in the BPS conference, and what was involved in the application process?

Espen: An email was sent around with a BPS Conference flyer attached. I thought there was nothing to lose by just applying for a presentation, so that's what I did. The application process involved sending in an abstract with sufficient details of the experiment conducted, which was then reviewed.

What did you have to do at the conference?

Le: The Conference started with a brief summary, where information about the event was given. Talks were given by Dr. Carole Allan (President of the BPS) and Dr. Rob Jenkins about the field of Psychology and future research. The day otherwise was filled with talks from other students who presented their current projects. I also did a presentation myself, and took the opportunity to do some networking with other students.

Espen: The presentation involved making a powerpoint which was presented in a lecture hall similar to LTB at Essex.

-continues on page 3-

BPS conference

-continued from page 2-

How similar or dissimilar was the conference to the PS300 poster presentation?

Espen: The BPS presentation was different from the PS300 poster because one was a poster and the other was a powerpoint. The PS300 poster was more of a summary with lenient format restriction in terms of presentation style. The BPS conference allowed 10 minutes to present your experiment(s), which allowed for more information to be shared. It was also easier to create the presentation digitally for the conference compared to creating a material poster for the Essex presentation, in my opinion. However, it was quite hard to reduce presentation content down to 10 minutes, so both the conference and the poster presentation had different types of challenges. The BPS conference involves presenting the project orally in front of an audience, similarly to the Brain & Behaviour presentation in our 2nd year.

Le: The conference was a few days before the poster presentation so it was fresh in mind. Furthermore, the PowerPoint file created for the Conference is also very similar to the poster, so the layout was the same. All in all, the Conference could be considered as a good way to practice, both for your poster session and public speaking in general.

What advice would you give future undergraduates wanting to go to the BPS conference?

Le: I had a lot of fun, so my first advice is simply to do it! It gives you a lot of good practice before the poster session. You may be able to pick up things you did wrong for the Conference to improve on the poster session, and present in front of people (which is a lot different from practicing in front of the mirror). For those who are a bit intimidated by public speaking, it's a great way to practice in a relaxed and friendly environment (no one will mark you). For those who enjoy doing public speaking, it is a fun way to spend a weekend. You have nothing to lose, and you can even add it on your CV. When you apply, the abstract you submit is the only information they will consider. So the quality of the abstract is probably the most important aspect.

News in brief

- Psychology Prof. Elaine Fox recently gave a public talk as part of the Lost Lectures Series in London. Her lecture can be viewed online <http://www.thelostlectures.com/455/prof-elaine-fox/>
- The Department will be hosting a Summer School in Judgement and Decision Making (JDM) for PhD students this summer (29 August to 4 September). This is the first such Summer School to be sponsored by the European Association for Decision Making – the major European academic society for researchers working on JDM. For more info go to: http://eadm.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=724:eadm-jdm-summer-school-2012&catid=99:summer-schools&Itemid=312
- Prof. Rick Hanley has won £2000 from the Experimental Psychology Society (EPS) for an undergraduate bursary. Former RES student Ana Gheorghiu will be working with Prof. Hanley over the summer. Congratulations!
- Congratulations also go to Dr. Tracy Robinson who will work on a project designed to build a knowledge bank as well as University web pages to enhance work-based learning and employability. The Project is funded by a £14000 TALIF grant.
- At the beginning of April, a conference entitled "Hot Topics in Audiology" was held at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, France, in honour of Prof. Ray Meddis.
- On May 26th, Dr. Silke Paulmann will speak at the Kids' Uni event. The day of lectures and activities aimed at 7 to 11 year olds will run from 10am to 4pm at the firstsite gallery in Colchester. <http://www.essex.ac.uk/futures/kidsuni/default.aspx>

Choices, choices, choices...?

By Lisa Phillips

In last month's newsletter we introduced some of the third year undergraduate psychology modules available for second year students to choose from. This month continues with another short guide to help with making your decisions...

PS490 Evolutionary Psychology:

"This module introduces students to a different way to understand human cognition and behaviour, within the framework of evolutionary theory. Humans like all other life on this planet are the product of the evolutionary process. Just like other organisms, we can expect that humans have been shaped by natural selection to think and behave in particular ways. The module is a whirlwind tour of evolutionary-predicted findings that relate to much of psychology, covering standard parts such as cognition and emotions, as well as areas rarely discussed much in psychology, such as close relationships including family and romantic partners.." – *Dr Rick O'Gorman*

PS491 Topics in Human Memory:

"In this module we consider different attempts to answer the related questions of "how do we remember?" and "why do we forget?" The module consists of 10 two-hour lectures and 10 one-hour computer workshops where you get to experience for yourself some of the tasks and phenomena covered in the module. Many experimental studies are covered - the module comes with over 100 sides of full-text cutting edge research - and the module places great emphasis on evaluating how well theories of memory (and concepts such as short-term memory) are supported by experimental evidence. The module will suit anyone who really likes to understand the evidence supporting different theories (that is, why do different researchers believe different theories are correct). We cover research into memory from 1885 to 2012 so it will also suit those students interested in an historical perspective to their studies." – *Prof. Geoff Ward*

PS481 Cognitive Neuropsychology:

"Despite the neuro in the title, this module is more about cognitive psychology than the brain. We examine the nature of the reading, face recognition and speech production problems that can occur as a consequence of brain injury such as a stroke or head injury. The critical issue is whether our cognitive theories can explain the unusual patterns of performance that individual patients sometimes produce (e.g. in capgras delusion, well known people feel like impostors; in deep dyslexia, words that can be perceived by the senses are read aloud better than abstract words; in proper name anomia, objects but not faces can be named). Coursework comprises a multiple choice test based on material from the first two lectures." – *Prof. Rick Hanley*

We hope that this has continued to provide an insight into what awaits you next year. Obviously, there are more modules to choose from than those reviewed by the newsletter. Further options are available on the University website.

Watch us on youtube!
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5ly7hJUrtQ>



How much for a PhD? See Note 1.

The option of a part-time PhD

By Natalie Kwok

Several of you will have wondered exactly how much does it cost to do a PhD? Unfortunately, if you go on to the Essex postgraduate tuition fees for 2012 - 2013 page, the only answer you will find is 'see note 1', and what would note 1 tell you? The fees for next year's postgraduate courses are not yet known¹. For people looking into graduate school, this certainly does not help the situation of our current economical struggles, that's already rooted in student debt and limited by the lack of scholarships. In the department of Psychology at Essex, only two PhD scholarships, covering all tuition and maintenance expenses, were offered for the next academic year, with the obvious expectation of at least a high 2:1 or a first class honours degree. With the two Essex scholarships available, as well as the ESRC (Economic and Social Research council) scholarships (which compete against 14 other research areas, from other departments, for 16 PhD studentships) there will be about a little less than a dozen elites qualified for a PhD in this department. Then does the world deem those with an average 2:1 inept to obtain a PhD or a Master degree because of financial difficulty?

That is, of course, untrue and is evident in the amount of currently enrolled graduate students. Support may come from parents, or other areas, and there is also the option to do a part-time PhD (which has become increasingly popular²). To most of us, the idea of a part-time PhD may be completely foreign as the majority of people have probably experienced a full time education.

Kali Demes', currently enrolled as a part-time PhD student in the department, describes her part-time PhD as something self-motivated and treats it like a job. That is, a PhD is not something you spend a few hours on each day, here and there (like an undergraduate degree). A PhD, whether full or part time, requires your full attention and focus for those days you can dedicate to working on it. Currently, now coming up to her final year, Kali also works part-time as a research assistant four days a week and for one day a week she works on her PhD. Although the layout of her week allows plenty of time for making ends meet, she says, the downfall is she doesn't see the progression of her, like a full-time student would. Although, the amount of time one can spend on a part-time PhD varies largely from student to student, it can be a challenge to find the right balance between work and study commitments. On the upside, a part-time PhD allows Kali to explore her area of interest and pay less each year in fees compared to a full-time student. Still, there's a need to emphasise that every PhD is different and is tailored to the individual and their work ethics. This individuality ranges from their supervisors to simple things like the days they want to spend working on their PhD. And unlike the undergraduate days, except for a few classes in the first year, there are no pre-formatted structural days set out for you; like Kali described, this is a self-motivated degree and each PhD is unique.

Indeed, the idea of graduate school encompasses a series of important considerations and a requirement of dedication and no doubt, hard work. For some, a PhD is a first option and everything is set in place, but for others, a PhD seems far-fetched due to the lack of financial resources. As demonstrated by Kali, maybe financing for a degree is not limited to scholarships and parents, as part-time degree is always presented as an option!

¹ http://www.essex.ac.uk/fees/pgr_next.aspx

² http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_33/

If you are interested in a self-funded PhD, we encourage you to talk to an academic member of staff or contact Postgraduate Studies Director Dr. Andrew Simpson to discuss your options.