



STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY

shine on





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Front cover image - courtesy of Smith Davis Press.
Science degree students on site of the new Science and Technology Centre.

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On behalf of all of us at Staffordshire University, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2010 and to thank all our stakeholders for their part in our success. We are all so proud of our graduates and all they have achieved.

We never doubt that this success has been hard won - with talent, creativity and a lot of hard work. This hard work has brought each of our graduates a qualification which will serve them well.

Every graduate has a story to tell and these are of challenges faced, of difficulties overcome and of new ideas and ways of thinking grasped. What is more, we recognise that in this unique person is the potential to go on changing and learning and making dreams come true.

This issue of shine on focuses on just some of these stories, along with some exciting developments from around the University.

Awards Week with its celebration of your success is just the most wonderful time for all of us. This year has been my last as your Vice-Chancellor and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Professor Michael Gunn who will take up the post of Staffordshire University's new Vice-Chancellor in 2011.

I want to wish you happiness and success, in whatever form this comes for you. I know you leave us with such riches; networks, contacts, skills, ideas, imagination and a determination to make the world a better place. I admire you and I wish you all the best for the future wherever your journey takes you. I hope our paths cross again, I will always be proud of you.

Professor Christine E King CBE, DL

The UniQ is the largest collaborative, education led regeneration project of its kind in the UK and has already seen the opening of a new Lifestyle building at Stoke-on-Trent College and the relocation of the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College to a new building adjoining Staffordshire University's campus on Leek Road.



University announces £30 million injection in science education

Staffordshire University has given the green light to a £30 million project which aims to inject and inspire confidence in the North Staffordshire economy.

Work to construct a state-of-the-art Science and Technology Centre, will launch the University Quarter (UniQ) into an exciting new stage in its development.

The centre will feature world-class facilities for students and Miller Construction have been appointed to work on the development which is rapidly taking shape next to the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College on Leek Road.

Staffordshire University Deputy Vice-Chancellor Paul Richards said: "The University has taken the decision that this can't wait. The Science and Technology Centre is another giant step in the regeneration of North Staffordshire and we are confident it will make a significant impact on creating a science-literate community and a qualified workforce to help grow our science-based industries.

"The new centre will also provide the University and its partners with the facilities and capacity to undertake more consultancy and research which has relevance to the wider world."

Chairman of Staffordshire University Board of Governors Steve Burgin added: "We are proud to be able to make this contribution. We have confidence in our future and recognise that we have a responsibility to provide the facilities to take us forward. We see this development as a catalyst of further inward investment which will attract new businesses to the Stoke-on-Trent area.

"It is also a key part of the programme to provide an academic hub in the City which aims to raise education and skills levels in the wider community."

The Centre, which is supported through an £8 million grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), will accommodate all of the University's science teaching and research as well as a range of other specialist fields, from renewable energy to medical technologies and biomechanics.



It features a host of specialist science and technology laboratories, a cognitive and developmental psychology suite, interview rooms, two lecture theatres which can transform into a single 250 seat facility, a dedicated IT suite, learning resource centre, flexible learning spaces, café, and public exhibition space.

Opening in the autumn of 2012, science students from the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent College will also make use of the new Science and Technology Centre, which aims to encourage progression to higher levels of study.

MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central, Tristram Hunt, welcomed the announcement .

He said: "I am delighted that the University has shown the leadership and ambition to continue with this profoundly important project. It is another step in the journey for Stoke-on-Trent as it moves towards a high-skill economy, in which universities and colleges become the wealth creators of tomorrow.

"It shows Stoke-on-Trent is open for new businesses, ideas and educators and makes a vital contribution to the ongoing regeneration of Stoke town."

Councillor Mervin Smith, Stoke-on-Trent City Council cabinet member for city development (regeneration), added:

"This is excellent news for Stoke-on-Trent as the city continues to deliver sustainable regeneration despite the current difficult economic climate."

Long term objectives to be achieved through the development of the Science and Technology Centre include:

- Expanding the science and technology educational offer through the development of 20 new innovative, flexible and industry relevant courses focusing on the challenges facing today's society.
- Working with employers to develop new products/ services and improve efficiency/processes within the science sector.
- Assisting entrepreneurs in the creation of more than 70 new business enterprises in the science and technology sector.
- Ensuring greater levels of local community participation and public engagement through an innovative and ongoing programme of activities and events.

For further information about UniQ visit www.uniq-stoke.org



Image courtesy of Matthew Roberts



after the eruption

Erupting volcanoes may seem a world away from events at Staffordshire University, but Professor Fiona Tweed insists that the Icelandic landscape has a special significance for staff and students here.

Fiona has been lecturing in Geography at Staffordshire University since 1994 and has an active research interest in glacial and hazard geomorphology - her PhD focused on predicting ice-dammed lake formation and glacier outburst flooding at the Mýrdalsjökull ice cap in Iceland!

Her research work has had a direct impact on policy – contributing to the planning undertaken by the Icelandic civil authorities to mitigate the impacts of glacier flooding – and teaching and as a result, a number of graduates are now following her lead.

“We have achieved a great deal by working together with like-minded colleagues; Professor Andrew Russell at Newcastle University is a long-standing collaborator,” explains Fiona. “In 1998 we started to run the Earthwatch funded ‘Icelandic Glaciers’ project chiefly to research the impacts of a huge outburst flood that occurred in 1996. Our research evolved and was supported for 12 years.”

The project involved groups of volunteers and assistants – including Staffordshire University students – venturing out to Iceland to join a specialist team of international researchers in surveying landforms, structures and landscapes, taking ice and sediment samples for analysis and monitoring environmental change.

The project played a big part in helping to train some scientists for the future – former Staffordshire University postgraduate Matthew Roberts is now living in Iceland and working as a research scientist for the Icelandic government. As an expert overseeing volcano-ice interaction on the island, Matthew had been monitoring the inflation of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano and collecting pre-field data prior to its eruption in April this year.

Fiona said: “The eruption was of great interest to geomorphologists. The media focused chiefly on the cancellation of flights due to the ash cloud, but the floods caused by melting ice had a big impact on the landscape and local population.”



Professor Fiona Tweed pictured in Iceland, photograph courtesy of Alan Linsdell

This summer Fiona travelled with fellow Staffordshire University geographers Tim Harris and Graham Smith to Iceland as part of a project to investigate snow patch response to changing climate. During their visit they travelled to the site of the volcano to see for themselves the impact of the eruption.

“The ice cap overlying the volcano used to look pristinely white but it is now black with ash, which has also covered large parts of the surrounding landscape,” said Fiona who managed to bring samples of volcanic ash back to illustrate her lectures. Fiona and project partners at Newcastle University, the University of Leeds, Northumbria University and the Icelandic Meteorological Office have recently secured new research funding from the Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC) which will ensure that work continues into the impacts of the floods from the Eyjafjallajökull eruption.

In the meantime, research scientists keep a cautious watch over Eyjafjallajökull’s larger sister, Katla, which is predicted to cause disruption on a far larger scale, including widespread flooding.

Watch this space....



At the 8th annual Staffordshire Conference on Clinical Biomechanics, Professor Chockalingam turned his attention to high heels – dispelling the myth that wearing high heels is a probable cause of ankle problems. Results showed that, as most participants did not wear their heeled footwear for more than nine hours a day, allowing time for their joints to recover, there were no negative effects.

from high heels to heelless running shoes

Biomechanics experts at Staffordshire University are uncovering new truths about footwear and what concerns consumers.

In the last year, biomechanics researchers have

- Found that image is more important than performance when it comes to choosing new trainers.
- Discovered that wearing stilettos and other high heeled shoes has no apparent ill effect on women's ankles.
- Played a leading role in a European-funded project to design and develop a heelless running shoe and to investigate the effect of such a shoe on running.

Said Professor Nachi Chockalingam: "The main influence on purchasing the trainer was colour and brand, highlighting that image and fashion are more important factors than cushioning and motion control."

The study carried out among a student population was conducted by Professor Chockalingam and Helen Branthwaite from the Faculty of Health and the findings published in the Footwear Science journal.

Nachi added: "This research obviously has implications for the big brands which pump millions into research and marketing with a view to develop shoes that alter running mechanics, improve lower limb function and reduce injuries.

"It will also form part of a much larger study, still focusing on the factors determining choice, but involving other age groups."

Keen to establish itself as a leader in the field of running research, the University is now looking for runners to volunteer to take part in a number of other research projects.

Professor Chockalingam added: "We are looking to develop some baseline research in running and running styles and we would like willing participants to contact us by emailing runningresearch@staffs.ac.uk."



forensic achievement in innovation

An innovative project which is breathing new life into school science lessons has scooped top prize in the finals of the Lord Stafford awards.

The brainchild of Staffordshire University's forensics Professor John Cassella, SciChem Forensic Investigations is designed to show schoolchildren the scientific processes behind crime scene investigation, thereby inspiring future generations of scientists.

Having resulted in significant sales for West Midlands company SciChem, the project has now been recognised through the prestigious 'Achievement in Innovation' title at this year's Lord Stafford awards.

To develop the idea, the University entered into a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Bilston-based schools equipment company Scientific and Chemical Supplies Ltd (SciChem) to produce and market forensic science kits.

Awards patron Lord Stafford said: "SciChem has been trading for more than 50 years, but this link up with the renowned Department of Forensic Science at Staffordshire University has seen them move into an entirely new area. This innovative project is not only helping the company but is also improving the image of science as a subject among youngsters."

The KTP employs Staffordshire University Forensic Science graduate and Masters student Philip Morton as an Associate whose role was to develop the kits.

Philip said: "Over the last two years I have developed, within SciChem, the ability to design, write, assemble and manufacture education resources that are unique to the market. I am very proud of this and the fact that we have received industry and region-wide recognition is fantastic."

Professor Cassella said: "We hope the win will assist in making Staffordshire University synonymous with forensic science teaching. It also demonstrates that enterprise and innovation is alive and well at Staffordshire University during these difficult economic times."

Tim Avery, Education Sales Director at SciChem Ltd said the partnership had exceeded all expectations and been the catalyst in discovering new untapped markets.

He added: "It started a process of moving us from a supplier to a developer and manufacturer of exclusive materials, and has enabled us to establish our new product development department. Our relationship with Staffordshire University now provides us with the platform for future development."



'amaze 2010' included work from an Iraqi student who completed his degree whilst trying to establish his citizenship and working as a translator. Behjat Omer Abdulla, 34, came to the UK in 1999, and studied for a degree in Fine Art, completing it part-time over six years. His project – a series of pencil portraits of asylum seekers taken from ID style photos – is a reflection of his experience of living in the UK.

Behjat said:
"This project has allowed me to deal with things that I had avoided talking about for a long time. The subjects are people who live in a state of constant uncertainty, an ambiguous period of wait and an intermediate state, being caught in an undefined time. Now in each one of my drawings I see the struggle and it makes it more visible all around me."



"gold dust for Stoke"

is how artist Matthew Rice described graduates at the opening of Staffordshire University's annual degree show.

Speaking at the opening of 'amaze 2010', Matthew – husband of ceramic designer Emma Bridgewater - spoke of the important role graduates have to play in regenerating the area.

He said: "Art graduates can be thought of as useless members of society; parasites, hangers-on and non-contributors. In fact, it is these very students, graphic or textile designers, film makers and sculptors, fine artists and ceramicists who are the most important economic drivers in the City.

"Artists are the stormtroopers of regeneration. Stoke's got artists and it sure needs regeneration".

Urging students to pursue their artistic careers in Stoke, he added: "It's a good place to start - a creative manufacturing town with a rock solid heritage of skills and technical expertise. You can make anything in Stoke!"



graduates hit town running

Two graduates have been revitalising companies, restaurants and even an entire town with new branding and marketing strategies.

Esme Burford and Lauren Awcock have successfully carried out projects for a number of clients during their time studying Advertising and Brand Management at Staffordshire University.

And now they plan to continue their successful working partnership after landing jobs at independent design agencies.

Their previous work has included the rebranding of Leek, in Staffordshire, with the aim of attracting more business and tourism to the town.

They have also devised a new student friendly marketing strategy for Leicester based Spanish restaurant Canas y Tapas and come up with a campaign to attract expats to the Andalucian Brewing Company's range of English ales.

Esme, 21, from Leicester, said: "Me and Lauren have known each other for three years, since we started our degree, and our work together has been going really well.

"Advertising is something I've always been really interested in and something I always wanted to get into. The course has really helped me to do that.

"It's different in that it's hands on and you get shown what it's like in the industry, getting contracts and briefs from clients, and you wouldn't get that if it was just a marketing degree. It's a great stepping stone into the industry."

Lauren, 21, from Manchester, said: "The course has been fab. The third year has been the highlight because it got us ready for working in the industry – it has set me up amazingly – because you are working directly with real clients.

"The Leek project has been a really good experience and we've seen it go live in shops and in the media. Even though it's finished now we're keen to see it through and we plan to carry on working together while doing our jobs."



triumphant trio gain their LPCs

A pact between three friends to complete their Legal Practice Course (LPC) together has seen them all graduate from the Law School.

The trio of legal executives, Joanne Clowes, Lesley Brown and Rachel Plant, all met through previous legal training courses before embarking on their latest qualification.

Joanne and Lesley have known each other for nearly 20 years. And then, through the Common Professional Examination (CPE) at Staffordshire University, Joanne met Rachel in 2007.

Joanne, 37, from Cheddleton, has been working full time at Uprights Solicitors, Leek, throughout her time on the course. She said: "My time at Staffs has been really good, the lecturers have been great, and we've been given a lot of respect as students."

Lesley, 40, from Staffordshire Moorlands, has specialised in criminal defence at Stevens Solicitors, Beswicks Solicitors and Atticus Solicitors, Newcastle-under-Lyme. She said: "I've loved every minute of the course. It's been



very practical; all the nice things about work with none of the problems. And the lecturers constantly strive to get you learning."

Rachel, 31, from Stoke-on-Trent, has worked for Woolliscrofts Solicitors since 1997 where she is due to be promoted to a Solicitor. She added: "We were working full time and students full time which was quite difficult. I did enjoy it, though, and it's really benefited my day-to-day legal work."

career boost

Kyrsty Bonham from the New Forest, chose the University for its outstanding reputation for law and sciences.

And as well as playing an active role in student life – becoming Mistress of Moots, organising the negotiation competition and raising money for Law Society sponsored events, Kyrsty became a mum for the first time.

She said: "It was very busy but great fun. We were running the internal moot competition two weeks before I gave birth."

Kyrsty achieved a 2:1 and has returned to the New Forest – with partner Peter Angus and daughter Isabelle – but is intent on continuing her legal studies. Long term, Kyrsty has ambitions to become a coroner and says she hopes her course will help her to achieve her career dreams.

"I am the first person from the University to graduate with my degree - LLB(Hons) with Forensic Science - and although I majored in Law I've got the advantage of having studied forensics and the two have worked well together."



solicitors holiday sacrifice

Two Trinidadian students sacrificed a combined 12 years holiday so they could study at Staffordshire University to become solicitors.

Pascall Marcelin and Francis Chattie are part of a 34 strong cohort from Trinidad and Tobago who came to study on the Legal Practice Course (LPC).

Pascall, 53, a former manager with a cement company, amassed six months of leave over five years and combined this with early retirement to study on the LPC.

He said: "I've always wanted to move into law because my job is about contracts and I've always been interested in that. I feel I can bring my work experience over the past 25 years to the job."

"I'm now going to a law firm to practice for the next six months and then I'm going into private practice."

Francis, 44, a policeman in his home country for 25 years, chose to forego his holiday over seven years so he could accrue enough in lieu to gain his LPC qualification.

Francis said: "I did my LLB in Trinidad and then I had to take vacation leave at work to accumulate enough time so I could utilise that to do the LPC at Staffordshire University. I made that sacrifice because it will be better for me being a lawyer in Trinidad."

He added: "My time at Staffordshire University has been really enjoyable; the staff are warm and friendly and there has never been a dull moment."

Helen Fox, Award Manager on the Legal Practice Course, said: "Pascall made a huge personal sacrifice and has left his family behind for nine months to make the move here. He completes his journey with a Commendation on the Legal Practice Course."

"And Francis has made great personal effort to come to England and study and his enthusiasm and commitment has been a great asset to the ethos of the course."

During the Law School ceremony The Award of Honorary Doctor of Staffordshire University was bestowed on Gail Narinesingh, (pictured centre) founder of the Trinidadian Institute of Law and Academic Studies (ILAS), for her inspirational leadership in teaching law and legal studies.



leading light in health psychology

"I love Staffordshire University – it's so supportive with a great student atmosphere and is at the forefront of Health Psychology."

This is Johanna Parry's explanation as to what kept bringing her back to Staffs Uni for over a decade of studies.

Johanna, 32, from Stockport has graduated this year with a Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology.

She began her studies back in 1996, and has been enjoying the student lifestyle ever since. She said: "There have been no real low points to studying for over a decade, apart from all the hard work!"

Johanna has now set her sights on beginning a career in teaching. "I would love to be able to work at Staffs Uni. It is a great place to live and I would recommend studying here to anybody."



PhD sparks Chinese partnership

A graduate is in the process of setting up the first ever Chinese/UK Centre for Rotating Machines as a result of his time at Staffordshire University

Wubin Xu, Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Guangxi University of Technology, has been awarded a PhD in Mechanical Engineering.

As a PhD student he spent half of his time on experimental investigation in China, but during the time he spent on campus, Wubin was so impressed by what he saw that he became determined to set up an official partnership between the two institutions.

He said: "This gave me the idea of setting up an exchange link for students and staff at the two universities, which soon expanded into the idea for an official partnership and now I am looking into launching the first Chinese/UK Centre for Rotating Machines – a very exciting prospect!"



Wubin has now returned to China but plans to revisit soon with his university's Chancellor Professor Dejian Zhou, to begin setting up the partnership and discuss the next steps towards creating the Centre.

lecturer shows commitment to both learning and teaching

A Lecturer in Forensic Science at Staffordshire University has graduated with a PhD in Forensic Science and a Diploma in Higher and Professional Education, in the same week.

Dr Claire Gwinnett, 28, became a full-time lecturer in 2008 after gaining a BSc in Forensic Science, two Postgraduate Certificates and a Doctorate in Philosophy.

She decided to carry on studying after becoming a lecturer, and has found being on both sides of the Staffordshire University experience fascinating.

Claire graduated with her PhD on the Tuesday and with her Diploma on the Thursday of Staffordshire University's Award's Week at the Trentham Estate.

She said: "I graduated six years ago in forensics and started my PhD in the September of the same year. I did some work as a Research Associate during that time and throughout my Doctorate, but I was still very much a student.

"Now though, my course supervisor and other staff who have taught me in the past are part of my team, so it has been a big transition to become a full-time Lecturer.



"It really is a fab team and although it has been strange seeing the department from both perspectives, they are all such characters and were tremendous to work with and be taught by.

They were always supportive and encouraging which makes a big difference. The only change now is that whereas before they were helpful lecturers, they are now helpful friends."

2010 role of honour

Each year, as part of Awards Week, Staffordshire University bestows its highest honour – Honorary Doctor of the University – upon individuals who have made a valuable contribution to society

2010 recipients are:
Emma Bridgewater; Gill Brown; Natasha Carlish; Fayyaz Afzal OBE; Mike Greenacre; David Kidney; Nikki King OBE; Hilary Lister; Eamonn McCabe; Deborah Meaden; Gail Narinesingh; Dr the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP; Professor Doctor Alfredo Rocafort Nicolau; Sir Kevin Satchwell and Tim Smit.

Staffordshire University Vice-Chancellor Professor Christine King CBE said:

"These are people who shine in their respective fields, who make a difference by being effective role-models and inspiring others, and who have achieved and continue to strive for fair play and equality."

Full biographies and video interviews with this year's honorary graduate can be viewed at www.staffs.ac.uk/about_us/about_the_university/doctors

Janet is first class childminder

Janet Glew graduated with a Foundation Degree in Early Years in 2008 when her groundbreaking research was reported in the Guardian.

Two years on and she has graduated with a First Class BA(Hons) in Early Childhood Studies from Staffordshire University and is hoping to use her knowledge and experience to support other practitioners.

At the same time she attained Early Years Professional Status. She said: "To go through it with a degree was pretty tricky and it was double the workload but it was worth it because then it all finished together."

"I'm still childminding but I am combining it with a lot of voluntary work including mentoring and support for the local authority as part of their Support Childminding Scheme, and I also facilitate 'stay and play' sessions for parents and carers."



Jonathan is a caring role model

Jonathan Brown is hoping his study experiences will encourage more men to consider Early Years education and care as a viable career option.

Jonathan, 38, from Penkridge opened the nursery at Chadsmoor Community Infant and Nursery School, Cannock in 2001 and has recently graduated with a Staffordshire University Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies.

And it's not the only good news Jonathan has received this year – after the nursery was awarded its second 'outstanding' rating following an OFSTED inspection.

"The course has given me a understanding of the underpinning theories and this is all helping to improve staff morale. The rewards are just immense – to be able to assist young children to attain their optimal potential and to be seen as a positive male role model is everything!"



Phil gives back to the University

Phil Burgess Walker has graduated with a BSc in Sport and Exercise, marking a successful career change into academia.

Phil, from Cheadle, joined the University after leaving a 23 year long career in the RAF. His time there saw him serving around the world, from New Zealand to the Gulf.

Phil previously had aspirations to become a PE teacher. In 2007 after visiting a Staffordshire University open day, he signed up to the Sport and Exercise course and after doing some initial research for one of his lecturers, he took on the role of Research Assistant at the end of his third year.

"I would love to carry on working for Staffordshire University," said Phil. "I had some past experience of lecturing in the military and to do this kind of work at the University gives me the opportunity to give back to the institution."

"The course and the job have given me a much more complete perspective on the industry I'm in as opposed to just the fitness coaching side and I am looking forward to my future work at the University."



In addition to his degree and Research role, Phil has also just finished his second season delivering sport science support to County Cricket, successfully delivering fitness plans for elite County Junior Cricketers.

Rachel's move to caring profession

When Rachel Bowen embarked on a career change several years ago, she set out to give it her best shot.

The former hotel manager has just achieved a First in her BSc(Hons) Nursing Practice (Adult) and is now employed at the Medical Assessment Unit at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

"It was when I was pregnant that I became interested in healthcare and I was torn between midwifery and nursing," said Rachel, 29. During her nursing degree course, Rachel got married and gave birth to her second child but continued her studies, passing with flying colours.

She said: "I really enjoyed the placements and had a good personal tutor. It's been hard work but I'm the sort of person who pushes myself and I've got family who have helped me through."





hats off to gainful employment

Five graduates have landed top jobs at an international IT firm after being talent spotted at GradEx.

Hundreds of students from the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Technology (FCET) showcase their work at the annual exhibition – which is visited every year by potential employers.

And this year saw Leo Wheeler, Simon Griffiths, Ross Birtwistle, Luke Richardson and Adam Welsh all employed by Capula, a utilities IT specialist based in Stone.

Ross Birtwistle, 22, was offered an interview at the company on the strength of his final year project which was showcased at GradEx.

He said: "A number of us were given an interview on the day and then got invited to a graduate open day at Capula which included a formal interview.

"I wasn't even looking for a job as I was going to do some travelling but I followed up the offer and was quite surprised to be starting a job three weeks before graduating."

Ross, 22, got a first in his BSc(Hons) Computer Science degree. He chose Staffordshire University for its reputation and facilities.

Adam, 21, started his job in August, after graduating with a BSc(Hons) Computer Networks and Security.

He said: "I really enjoyed the course. I had a brilliant time. My favourite thing has been working on my final year project, an intrusion prevention system, which protects computer systems.

"Also, while I was on the course, Capula contacted the University about recruitment days they were running and because of that I was recommended and attended one of the days. That's how I got the job."

Capula is a leading provider of operational IT systems to the nuclear, power generation and utility markets. The company is a sponsor of GradEx and also sends a representative to judge projects at the event.



drumming up new business for experienced session musician

Musician Jonathon "Jonno" Lodge has been a drummer since he was four years old and has played with a vast array of bands in venues throughout Europe.

Now, after attaining a First in BSc(Hons) Music Technology with Management, he hopes to take his career to new heights.

Jonno, 21, from Doncaster, said: "It's what I always wanted to do since I was four years old. When I was ten I had my first show, in the Millennium Dome, in London, and I've been teaching since I was 15."

Before going to University, at the age of 18, Jonno toured with metal band Biomechanical throughout the UK and Europe and played with ex-Iron Maiden frontman Paul Di'Anno.

"Basically, I came to university because I wanted to expand on the technical and strategic side of things," he said. "I wanted to produce a marketing strategy for my business so I did this as my dissertation project and, so far, I've received a fair amount of work from it."

Jonno now plans to continue as a session drummer, playing live and in the studio, as well as teaching.

He added: "It's very hard to start up a band and make it, but as a session player there's always options and there is a constant demand for it. I only have to rely on myself and I can have as much or as little work as I need.

"There have been times when, in a single day, I've been doing a sound check for TV and then driven to Birmingham and played with a band live. In short, I'm never out of work. I plan on doing it for the rest of my life."



For more images and video footage from Awards 2010 visit www.staffs.ac.uk/about_us/news_and_events/graduation or www.youtube.com/staffsuni.

sports journalists raise their game

Emily Atyeo and Antonia DeFeo say the experience gained on their Masters degree has prepared them well for life in the football fast lane.

Emily and Antonia have both graduated from Staffordshire University with an MA in Sports Broadcast Journalism and both are currently employed with football clubs.

Emily, who works as a Media Relations officer for Watford FC, having previously worked with Aston Villa and Swindon, said she chose the course after hearing good reports from previous graduates.

And although life at the football club hasn't been easy, she praised the course and its award leader Mitch Pryce for giving her the best possible chance of survival.

"It's been a really difficult season as we were only a day away from administration and throughout that I've been trying to finish off the Masters.

"However it's been brilliant and the support I've had from the department has been invaluable. They're realistic about it – it's especially tough as young women trying to make it in the football industry - and they tell us how it is. Mitch has toughened us up – and I'm not sure I'd have survived without his help."

Emily said the course had helped to instil in her both passion and commitment and her new goals were to learn the football industry inside out.

Antonia, who is working as a New Media Journalist with Everton FC, added: "I'm eternally grateful to Mitch for his advice and availability."



graduate in world record attempt to cycle Atlantic in pedalo

Cycling across the Atlantic Ocean may seem an impossible task but one graduate is to attempt the feat – in a pedalo designed as part of his final year project.

Mark Byass, 23, who graduated with a BEng(Hons) Mechatronics, aims to complete the 3,000 mile crossing with teammate Mike Sayer, 26.

The challenge, called Project Torpedalo, has received numerous sponsorship deals as well as TV interest ahead of the planned launch in December 2011. The whole journey, from the Canary Islands to Antigua, is expected to take a world record breaking 38 days and raise £250,000 for charity.

Mark said: "A pedalo has only ever made this journey once before, in 1994, taking 111 days. We want to do it in 38 days, which means we will be pedalling around 70 nautical miles a day.

"We will each have to pedal two-hours-on two-hours-off for 24 hours-a-day because someone has to keep watch for hazards. And, because it's 12 hours pedalling each, we will have to consume 8000 calories and 12 litres of water a day."

The two crewmen plan to complete the ocean crossing as part of the Woodvale Challenge trans-Atlantic rowing race, which usually involves around 30 rowing boats.

Television production company Lion Eyes has already filmed part of the preparation for the journey and it is hoped that a full documentary will get underway shortly – providing a network agrees to air the show.

"They filmed some of the model testing and sponsor meetings as well as when we had to get our bottoms scanned for the seat designs – they're trying to keep it quite light hearted."

The pedalo that will carry Mark and Mike across the Atlantic will be nine meters long, built mostly of carbon fibre and be able to cruise at around three knots, with a maximum self-propelled speed of seven knots.



Mark said: "The boat is not only our transportation, it is our home for 38 days. We have to take all the food we need for the trip and our water supply is through onboard desalination, powered by solar panels."

Both crewmen work for Bentley Motors and have secured support throughout the company – among numerous other sponsors – to help fund and supply the project.

Mark joined the iconic British car-maker on a degree sponsored apprenticeship five years ago – during which time he studied at Staffordshire University – and has since been heavily involved in the company's charity fundraising schemes.

Project Torpedalo is the latest of these, with both crewmen selecting a charity to support: the Motor Neurone Disease Association and the Make a Wish Foundation.

mum transforms career prospects

Mum of two Paula Dean has fast-tracked herself into a promising new career after completing a degree and a teaching qualification in less than three years.

Paula, 30, from Stoke-on-Trent recently graduated from the two year BA(Hons) Business Management degree and a PGCE in Business.

Single mum Paula was encouraged to rethink her future after she was made redundant from her job as plant hire manager. She attended a Fast-track to HE course at Stoke-on-Trent College but was unaware of Staffordshire University's fast-track degrees when she enrolled.

She explained: "I transferred on to the fast-track degree based on my performance in the first year. Because I was used to working all through the year and the fast-track is the same but without the big summer break, I found it ideal.

"I qualified with my degree having only incurred two years tuition fees which was another huge incentive considering I have a family to support."



It was the same drive and determination – and some timely help and advice from her award tutor – that led her down the teaching route.

MBA placement leads to job offer

The Masters in Business Administration has set Mainak Ray on a new career path with an international company.

Mainak, 26, previously studied for a degree in Computer Science at Calcutta University. He opted to study for the MBA at Staffordshire to acquire an international degree and because he was particularly interested in the placement opportunities on offer.

Mainak says he especially enjoyed the international study module which took him to Prague and was delighted to be chosen from 120 students to land a placement with the US diesel engine manufacturing company Cummins at their Daventry site.

He said: "It was very successful and I was recognised as the most outstanding placement student, winning a bursary from Cummins to help me towards the degree."



In May, after completing his degree, Mainak started a full-time job with the Cummins as an account representative working in the same department where he completed his 12 months placement.

RAF graduates are flying high

26 RAF personnel were among students graduating from this year's Business School Ceremony.

Among them was Ash Malik, 48, a warrant officer with Air Command based at High Wycombe, who graduated with a Postgraduate Certificate in Management Studies.

He started the Postgraduate Diploma in Management Studies (Pg Dip MS) in September which leads to the award of MBA, a qualification recognised worldwide, and has nothing but praise for Staffordshire University and the flexible course structure.

He said: "This award has been designed for military personnel and if you miss a module because of a posting to Afghanistan or Iraq then you can always resit at a later date.

"That's what I find very attractive – to be on campus five days and then have six weeks to complete an assignment

means it is broken down into manageable chunks which keeps the enthusiasm and motivation going. I now have underpinning knowledge to add to the practical experience."

Civilian Gaz Stenning who works at RAF Lynham, was one of 15 students who graduated with a Foundation Degree in Leadership and Management (FDLM).

He said: "I've tried the Open University but I couldn't get on as I'm the type who needs some input from a tutor.

"At my next grade, people are undertaking a Masters degree and I might look towards finding a suitable Masters for me. Air Command have been superb in supporting me."

Following the success of these and other awards, student numbers have grown considerably and there are now around 650 RAF students registered on courses across the University. September 2010 saw the start of a Postgraduate Certificate in Human Resource Management.



launch pad to business success

Budding entrepreneurs are being given the skills and guidance to launch their own businesses through a new course at the Business School.

The Foundation Degree in Business Start-up has now seen its first cohort of graduates (pictured with University honorary graduate Deborah Meaden), successfully start their own enterprises, ranging from book keeping to photography.

Emily Walker, 28, from Stoke-on-Trent, runs Semi-Permanent Make-up and Medical Tattooing, which includes cosmetic treatments and confidence boosting help for people with conditions such as cancer or alopecia.

She said: "I wanted to get on the Foundation Degree for various reasons: the resources that are offered by the University, the access and networking opportunities, there is a lot to be learnt from the lecturers about the different ways of doing business and promoting your company."

Julie Lou Weston, 40, from Stoke-on-Trent, completed the two year Foundation Degree and topped this up with a third year to gain a BA(Hons) in Entrepreneurship for the Creative and Cultural Industries. She now runs iArtizan, a photography practice.

Julie said: "I was working in an office, in finance, before this, and I'm now running my own photography business. The course has taught me skills that I've then been able to apply to my work. It has helped me to think outside the box and be a bit more creative in how I run my business and what I'm doing to promote it."

Tina Rees, 42, from Stafford, set up Advance - Business and People Development Ltd during the second year of her course. The company delivers vocational training programmes throughout the West Midlands.

Mary-Anne Rapson, 36, from Stoke-on-Trent, spent more than 10 years in the bookkeeping business before deciding to use her experience to launch Flexibooks Bookkeeping.

Course leader for FD Business Start-up, Stephen Kelly, added: "The course is specifically designed to develop entrepreneurship, enterprise and management skills in a supportive environment.

"It follows a systematic process of starting up, developing and managing a business. The Business School is fully committed to entrepreneurship and enterprise and this is a piece of that jigsaw."



fast-track student scoops industry Student of the Year Award

A fast-track student has won a prestigious industry award.

Karl McCormack (pictured with cheque) has won the Hays Accounting and Finance Student of the Year Award, after completing a two year fast-track degree in Accounting and Finance.

The former Tesco retail manager gained a first class honours degree and achieved the highest pass rate possible with an unprecedented grade point 15 for all his assessed work.

Karl, 41, from Cheadle, Staffordshire, said: "It was beyond my wildest expectations to do as well as I did. I never expected to get the award because everyone on the course was achieving such high marks so to get it was a big surprise."

Karl has now started a placement at the Royal Bank of Scotland's European Operations Centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme. He's also been offered an MBA Scholarship at Staffordshire University and is currently undertaking research for the Business School.

He said: "The course has given me a much wider sense of the global financial world and I've been able to pass that on to family and friends and help them with their mortgages and things like that, so it will be great to give something back to Staffordshire University as well."

Recent research by Staffordshire University has revealed that fast-track degree students are outperforming those on three year degrees.

Karl is one example of the advantages of attaining a degree in just two years.

He said: "I was a retail manager at Tesco for 13 years and I wanted to get out of the 24/7 retail environment. I found the fast-track degree at the University and because I came from a work environment taking just two years out to complete it really appealed to me.

"I would recommend the course to anybody; mature students first of all because it suits them coming from a work environment, because they're doing similar hours."





film maker captures relief effort in flood stricken Pakistan

Devastating floods left millions of people homeless in Pakistan earlier this year and an enterprising graduate has been capturing the relief effort on camera.

Andrew Rowell, who graduated with a BA(Hons) in Film, TV and Radio Studies, visited the country with Dragons' Den star James Caan and Stoke-based WaterWorld owner and Staffordshire University honorary graduate Mo Chaudry.

The entrepreneurs are part of a high-profile delegation which is raising awareness and funds to help victims of the floods.

As part of the visit, the delegation went to a village about an hour-and-a-half north of Islamabad to see the destruction caused by the floods for themselves and how they could help those who had been affected.

They also met with the interior minister of Pakistan as well as aid groups and agencies already on the ground.

Andrew said: "The village we visited was completely self-sufficient for decades but since the floods came, mud has been left all over the crops and the people have lost their homes and their livelihoods.

"So the aim was to go out there and rebuild the village. Now 150 new homes are being built."

The trip, however, got off to a shaky start. Andrew recalled: "On the first day there we had an earthquake in the middle of the night, and my whole room was shaking, which was certainly scary.

"The second day we went to a different village and there was gunfire – we're still not sure if it was directed at us.

"The best thing, though, was meeting so many different people. They were so grateful for the help and grateful we were there."

He added: "You see all the statistics and figures about the floods but you don't realise until you see the devastation just how bad it is – that's the really hard thing about it.

"There are not many people that get to go to these places and do these things. I was the only person out there with a camera and I was the first independent film maker out there as well."

The relief campaign has been launched by Prince Charles' Seeing is Believing project, the James Caan Foundation and Islamic Relief.

Andrew's footage from the visit has been shown on BBC and ITV news programmes, and he is now hoping to go back to Pakistan to film the outcome of the relief efforts.

To see Andrew's film visit www.junction15.com





an actor's life, by me

Film, television and theatre actor Amit Shah talks about his career after graduating from Staffs.

A graduate of Drama and Theatre Studies at Staffordshire University, Amit Shah's meteoric launch into performing arts has already seen him star in television, film and on stage.

Most recently he's been featuring in new BBC2 series Whites, alongside Alan Davies. He's also rehearsing and performing in the West End, at the Donmar Warehouse, in Shakespeare's King Lear, alongside British classical actor Sir Derek Jacobi.

In his own words, Amit told shine on about his career:

"Back in early 2002 I was preparing for my final Shakespeare project as part of the Drama and Theatre Arts course at Staffs. My tutor took me aside and asked me whether I had thought about applying for Drama Training at one of the prestigious Drama Schools in London.

I was sceptical and did not think there were many prospects for British Asian actors in the performing arts. Eventually I was persuaded to audition and was lucky enough to be accepted. I remember the day of receiving my acceptance letter vividly. I had never felt excited like that ever before.

I had heard the saying that the business was all about "being in the right place at the right time" but I never fully understood that until I was about to complete my training at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

My sister persuaded me to audition for a new Andrew Lloyd Webber musical called Bombay Dreams. I sent off my CV and after five auditions I landed a part and had my performance two days after my Drama School graduation.

My good luck was so unbelievable that as a result I adopted a very pessimistic attitude towards my prospects in the business, to compensate.

That is possibly why I have been able to work so much over the past eight years – because I have never expected to be offered any of the parts for which I have auditioned. I have been lucky to perform and work in the best theatres in Britain, well-known television series and big-budget movies, with people who are the best at what they do.

"As my experience at Staffordshire University gave me the confidence to apply for Drama School and eventually audition for professional acting jobs, I will always find time to talk about it fondly.

"Luck has dictated a lot of my career but I like to think that I was always meant to be an actor and I am glad Staffs Uni is where I took my first steps on this wonderful journey."



My highlights have to be my experiences at the National Theatre and Royal Court Theatre in London. As an actor there is simply nothing better than being able to play a scene with another actor in front of a live audience who are totally engaged by every word and action.

My fondest role has to be that of Abel Drugger in the National's production of The Alchemist by Ben Jonson, for which I was nominated for an Ian Charleson Award.

In recent years I have been lucky enough to spread my wings and work in television and film and last year I landed a great role in a movie, written by comedian David Baddiel and starring Omid Djalili – yes, the rather large Iranian comic who appears in the commercials for a well known price comparison website. I played Omid's son in a story about a British Muslim who finds out he was adopted at birth and is actually Jewish (pictured above).

Now I'm in a TV comedy in which I play one of the regulars on a BBC2 show called Whites. I play Axel, the clumsy, bumbling kitchen hand who is not very speedy at his work.

And I also started rehearsals for King Lear at the Donmar Warehouse in the West End at the end of October, opposite Derek Jacobi who plays Lear. I play Oswald, who is a political advisor to the King's daughter Goneril played by Gina McKee from the movie Notting Hill. The West End run is followed by a UK tour and then a New York tour.



internet venture has high goals

A law graduate has had runaway success with his new internet venture and has expectations of it turning into a multimillion pound business within three years.

www.seonext.co.uk is the fastest growing company in its field, claims Mark Blackhurst, 32, from Stockport.

Alongside two partners, he has already opened offices in Dehli, India, and Sydney, Australia, as well as Manchester, in the UK. His ambitions see him dominating the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) market in the UK.

"Basically, what we do is improve companies' rankings on internet search engines," he said.

"We provide a series of changes to our clients' websites to make them more conducive to good search engine rankings and then we submit them to various places on the internet.

"This is not rocket science, but we have a great, carefully planned process that works."

The idea for www.seonext.co.uk initially came from Mark's days studying for his law qualifications at Staffordshire University.

When Mark launched www.seonext.co.uk around four years ago it mostly dealt with outsourced work from other companies. A year ago the company started working with clients directly.

"Around two-and-a-half years ago I realised that the company was economically viable, ever since then it's taken off massively.

"In three years from now our mission is to be the biggest organisation of its type in the UK and we aim to push it to being a £6 million turnover company."

"I have a particular interest in the Internet and IT. I studied the IT Law module at Staffordshire University and it was the most interesting part of the course for me," said Mark, who gained his LLB(Hons) in 2000 and LPC in 2006.

"At the time I actually wrote a very long essay on the effect of the Y2K bug and that's when I started reading about the internet more and got to understand how important the internet is in the business world."

immigration and asylum are graduate's forte

Foreign nationals who have been refused asylum or entry to the UK will pass through processes designed by a law graduate.

Hazel Burgess has been working for the UK Border Agency for over six years as part of a central team responsible for appeal processes.

Here she manages the relationship between the agency and the Tribunals Service and acts as a contact for queries and ministerial questions.

She said: "My job involves developing processes and managing various projects. This includes preparing new initiatives, such as the introduction of a new tribunal, and streamlining processes to obtain maximum performance against government targets.

"I also write guidance and set standards for immigration and asylum appeals; reviewing current processes to identify reasons for delays and inefficiencies, making recommendations for change."

Writing new legislation is something that has appealed to Hazel since she graduated from Staffordshire University with an LLB(Hons) in 2003, after which she took up a role as a court clerk within the Tribunals Service.

"My first role with the UK Border Agency was as a presenting officer in the immigration and asylum tribunal," she said.

"Luckily, my course had given me the confidence and skills I needed to present my cases convincingly to the tribunal and respond to arguments put forward by the legal representatives. My course also helped me develop critical analysis and research skills.

"I made great friends at university. I enjoyed taking part in seminars and having the opportunity to work in groups to achieve a task. All these activities helped prepare me for the workplace."



Hazel now aspires to advance up the career ladder and is considering a move to London.

She added: "I've just passed an assessment centre which means I can move up to the next grade, so I'm currently looking for a role which fits my skills and experience.

"I've lived in Stoke-on-Trent my whole life and I think it's time for a change, I envisage moving to London to progress my career within the UK Border Agency."

world karting record smashed

The world record for driving a kart solo for 24 hours has been smashed by a Staffordshire University graduate.

Lloyd de Boltz-Miller, who studied BSc(Hons) Motorsport Technology, already held the British and European records for the most distance covered in a kart in one day.

Now he has added the world record to his list of achievements after equalling the previous record with more than three hours of circuit time to spare.

He covered an extra 137km on top of the previous distance, setting a total of 1,289.12km (801.38miles) in 24 hours.

Lloyd, 25, from Norwich, said: "It's a massive amount over the previous record. Our target was always to smash it. We were looking to take it by a large amount but then I had to remember that it was a world record for a reason.

"But to take a world record on one of the toughest circuits in the UK was not a bad day in the office."

Lloyd chose his favourite circuit to break the record on, Whilton Mill Kart Track in Northamptonshire. He completed 1151 laps.

He said: "The circuit is the most physical in the UK. There are other circuits that would have lent themselves better, with longer straights and distances, but fundamentally I love driving Whilton so that's why I went there."

Staffordshire University was one of the sponsors for the event and it was during Lloyd's studies that he broke the British and European records last year.

He said: "My degree set me forward when pushing on with the task of breaking the world record. I learnt different skills and principles in the different modules on the course and, being the racing team manager, these really helped. I couldn't have achieved the record without them. My degree has been fundamental."

Lloyd, who used the event to promote the charity The Wings for Life Spinal Cord Research Foundation, is not done with his world record breaking endeavours and is currently training for his next challenge racing a Porsche Carrera Cup racing car flat out for 24 hours.



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