

HORIZON

Staffordshire University
2021/22 ISSUE



OUR GREAT POTTERY CHAMPION

TV's Keith Brymer
Jones shares his love for
Staffordshire University

THE CAMERA NEVER LIES

Stunning images from
photography alumni
past and present

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Meet staff, students
and alumni active
during the pandemic



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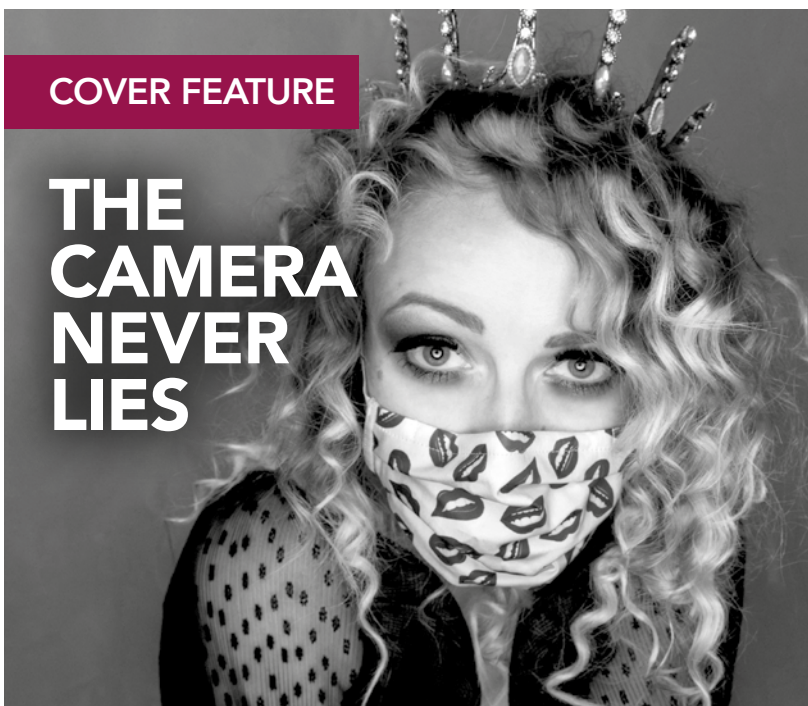
CONTENTS

The great pottery champion	06	London calling	34
Keith Brymer Jones shares his passions for pottery, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire University.		Find out more about Staffordshire University London's ambitious expansion plans.	
Leading from the front	10	The camera never lies	36
Meet some of the Staffordshire University staff, students and alumni who have played active roles throughout the pandemic.		Three Staffordshire University photography alumni explain how their degree course helped them to forge a career in such a competitive industry.	
Horizon fundraising	16	Life's a drag	44
Find out how you can help today's students flourish.		Graduate Craig Worthington tells us about the creation and deliverance of drag queen Fleur West.	
Esports on the rise	18	CSI Staffordshire	46
The first cohort of students from the UK's first esports degree will graduate this summer.		Find out more about Staffordshire University's growing reputation in the fields of crime, justice and security.	
In a jam	22	School of thought	50
Staffordshire University is helping to stage an event that's believed to be a world first and could launch a young games designer's career.		Did you know that there's a Staffordshire University Academies Trust made up of 20 schools?	
Welcome to the Innovation Enterprise Zone	24	A compelling new drama	52
How Staffordshire University's multi-million-pound Innovation Enterprise Zone is helping the regional economy post COVID-19.		How a Masters in Collaborative Theatre Practice aims to help the arts bounce back post-coronavirus.	
The future is green	28	Three voices	55
Read about the University's plans for a sustainable future – including a forest school and becoming carbon neutral.		Discover what drove three Staffordshire University graduates to be so successful.	
		News	60
		The latest news and views.	



Horizon is published by Marketing, Recruitment and Communications at Staffordshire University. www.staffs.ac.uk

FEATURE ARTICLES



WELCOME

WELCOME TO THE INNOVATION ENTERPRISE ZONE

24

Welcome to the 2021 issue of Staffordshire University's Horizon magazine. The last 15 months have been a challenging time for everyone, and I hope you have stayed safe and well.



At Staffordshire University we have been enormously proud of how our Connected University community has risen to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While all eyes are on the future, it is important to pause and be thankful for the efforts that have got us to this point. That is why in this issue you will meet some of the staff, students and alumni who have played active roles in responding to the pandemic.

While COVID-19 might have disrupted our lives, it has not held us back here at your University. In this issue you will get a flavour of all the work being undertaken to create a better world for our graduates and communities.

I'm delighted to say the first cohort of students from the UK's first esports degree graduate this year and a good number of them are already securing roles in this exciting and fast-growing industry. To keep pace with developments in the tech industries, you can also read more about Staffordshire University London's ambitious expansion plans and how you can get involved.

Sadly, this will be the last Horizon welcome I will write as I have decided to retire as Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive at the end of this calendar year, December 2021. I would like to thank you for your ongoing support.

I have been privileged to lead Staffordshire University over the last five years and am immensely proud of what we have achieved as a Connected University community. I am also incredibly proud of our alumni and your achievements and the difference you make in your community.

It remains an exciting time of change here at Staffordshire University and there is much to look forward to as we continue to cement our reputation as a globally connected, digital pioneer within the fields of education, research and enterprise.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Horizon, and I wish you all the very best for the future.

Professor Liz Barnes CBE DL
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
Staffordshire University

36



THE GREAT POTTERY

CHAMPION

Staffordshire University honorary doctor and TV personality Keith Brymer Jones talks to Horizon magazine about his passions for pottery, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire University.

Keith Brymer Jones has a reputation for being emotional. Watch any episode of TV's *The Great Pottery Throw Down* and you'll see him shed tears of joy over a beautifully thrown bowl or the gleam of an expertly applied glaze.

Get him onto the subject of Staffordshire University, where he's an honorary doctor, and passion oozes from him like wet clay between fingers.

The master potter doesn't just love pottery and the process of making it, he loves Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire University and the creativity that runs through the veins of both.

"I've been travelling up to Stoke-on-Trent since the 1980s for various reasons," he says. "Then a few years ago I was at an event in London and got to know the gang from Staffordshire University really well, including the head of 3D Design.

"I've been invited many a time to attend 3D Design end of year shows and I'm always literally blown away by the creativity and the processes students go through. It's a wonderful thing."

So being offered an honorary doctorate by a university he felt such a connection with was clearly a very significant moment for Keith.

"I do believe that Staffordshire University is one of the best design universities that you could possibly go to. You couldn't go far wrong going to Staffordshire University. It's wonderful."

For Keith, creative industries will be the route out of problems posed by both Brexit and a certain global pandemic.

"We need more creative thinking and creative subjects to teach our young," he enthuses. "It's important."

And he believes there's nowhere better to study those creative subjects than the spiritual home of pottery.

"There's a wonderful history of ceramics in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire University really is leading the way in design courses for the country. For me, it's always wonderful to go up there and see what the students are doing.

"The staff are so passionate about the students' work

and the courses that they run. They give fantastic support to the students. It's really important that we promote the work that they do."

Keith has been a judge on *The Great Pottery Throw Down* since it was first aired in 2015. He's become a household name, not least for his visible emotion in every episode.

"There's far more crying than you see on the television," he says. "They have production meetings to decide which bits of me crying to leave out let alone to leave in."

He's been called the most decent man on television due to his empathy and kindness, and *The Great Pottery Throw Down* has been held up as perfect lockdown viewing.

"It's been a different experience this last year because of the pandemic," he says. "Fortunately, we were still able to film. Our production company wrote the regulations on filming in a pandemic.



Keith in his studio in Whitstable, Kent.

"THE STAFF ARE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE STUDENTS' WORK AND THE COURSES THAT THEY RUN. THEY GIVE FANTASTIC SUPPORT TO THE STUDENTS. IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE PROMOTE THE WORK THAT THEY DO."



Keith supporting the work of young ceramicists and receiving his honorary doctorate.

“Our potters really connected with each other this year which was largely due to having to bubble up for filming. There was definitely a community spirit, not just with the potters themselves but also the camera and sound team. Everyone had to isolate for the whole duration. It was very emotionally charged.”

Keith is clear that he would have turned down the opportunity to be part of the show if it hadn't been based on kindness.

“When I was first asked to do the show I said to the head honcho of Love Productions that I didn't want to do car crash TV.

“I didn't want to do something like X Factor or Britain's Got Talent, where you set people up to fail. With pottery you could quite easily do that. There are lots of things that can go wrong.

“He reassured me that he really wanted to extol the virtues of pottery. We try to be incredibly encouraging to all the potters.”

The show has built up such a following that visitor figures rose by around 1,000% at Middleport Pottery, the location for the first few series.

Filming for the most recent

series switched to Gladstone Pottery Museum, which is hoping for a similar tourism boost.

“It was like a fortress while we were filming.” says Keith. “In terms of having a closed set because of COVID-19 it was ideal.

“The museum, which is run by Stoke-on-Trent City Council was closed to visitors at the time so we had the run of the place.

“It's a wonderful museum, the aesthetic is lovely. Hopefully it will have the same increase in visitors as Middleport.”

Keith reveals that Dorset was briefly considered as the location for the first series – but that he and others quickly pointed out that it couldn't be filmed anywhere other than the heart of the UK pottery industry.

Keith's own pottery studio is in a converted bakery in Whitstable, Kent. It's here that he hand designs every Keith Brymer Jones item.

He also throws shapes on his pottery wheel for other designers in his job as Head of Design at MAKE International, a leading retailer of designer ceramics with a wholesale division. In this role he has collaborated

with designers and brands such as Scion, Jane Foster, Tatty Devine, The National Trust, Bert & Buoy, Sukie, Hokolo and Becky Baur.

In more normal times Keith perfects a pottery shape on his wheel then personally takes the prototypes out to China where he works with an expert team on the factory floor to ensure mass produced products maintain the same standards as the ones in the studio back home. All of the pieces in the Keith Brymer Jones ranges are then finished by hand.

Of course global events of the past year have made international travel impossible.

“I've been travelling out to China for more than a decade now and was going over there seven, eight, nine times a year. Obviously the last year that's sadly completely stopped,” he says.

“We've been working with China for such a long time and have such an amazing team, they're like family to us

“The COVID-19 situation is fairly stable over there. They're pretty much back to normal. But the world has kind of stopped in terms of retail and productivity.”



Fortunately for Keith his online business within the UK is going from strength to strength as his Keith Brymer Jones pottery brand grows in popularity.

"We're concentrating on the UK market at the moment, but it's tough for all business," he says. "I really feel for the manufacturers based in Stoke-on-Trent as well."

Keith says his dream is to bring his pottery manufacturing to Stoke-on-Trent, but that it hasn't been a commercially viable option for him yet.

He says: "It does annoy me when people say 'I didn't realise your products were made in China'. The answer is in the name. Not only do they produce china but they produce some of the best china in the world."

And of course, the prototype for every single piece has been personally handmade by Keith at the start of the process.

"I'm a craft studio potter at heart," he adds. "I made my first bit of ceramics, a pottery owl, at the age of 11 and I haven't stopped since."



Keith at work in his studio.

"I'M A CRAFT STUDIO POTTER AT HEART... I MADE MY FIRST BIT OF CERAMICS, A POTTERY OWL, AT THE AGE OF 11 AND I HAVEN'T STOPPED SINCE."

LEADING FROM THE

From leading a Ministry of Defence task force to sourcing PPE for the NHS. From inventing a field ventilator and training laboratory staff to acting as national spokespeople, Staffordshire University staff, students and alumni have played active roles throughout the pandemic. Seven individuals share their story with Horizon magazine.



COURTNEY- JAYNE FOLEY MBE

Her work as a Maritime Electronic Warfare Manager within the MOD is so secretive that, other than confirming her job

title, Staffordshire University Forensic Science graduate Courtney-Jayne Foley can't talk openly about it.

But Courtney-Jayne's work during an intense three-month secondment towards the start of the pandemic is a different matter entirely.

She is not only able to talk about her experiences, she was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List in recognition of that work.

Courtney-Jayne, who graduated in 2011, answered a call for volunteers and was seconded to lead the MOD's special operations team in PPE procurement for the NHS.

Her job was to help ensure the NHS not only had enough

PPE but that the PPE being provided was of suitably high quality.

"What I ended up doing was special operations and politically sensitive," she says. "I did a lot of work with the Sri Lankan High Commission and the Beijing Embassy. I was setting up processes and technical assurances.

"It was quite an eye opener as to just how much work goes into it. The NHS was overwhelmed so they brought us in to boost the numbers."

From April to June 2020 Courtney-Jayne was working intense 12 to 14 hour days on the project and didn't have a day off work during that period.

"You watch the news, see what's happening and want to help, which is why I volunteered," she says.

Courtney-Jayne has now gone back to her day job, but says those three months were a hugely beneficial experience.

"It involved a lot of different skills, dealing with people you normally wouldn't deal with. I had to be quite resilient as I was leading a team and you have to lead from the front. Even when you're having a bad day you can't be seen to be having a bad day."

FRONT



IAN DAVIES

As Healthcare Science course leader and a senior lecturer in Biomedical Science, when the pandemic began Ian Davies' first thoughts were with the 70 Staffordshire University students on

apprenticeships in pathology departments at hospitals around the country.

"They were right at the forefront of the testing and still are at the forefront of the testing, so obviously what we had to do was make sure they were okay in terms of their welfare and getting the support that they needed," he says. "That was the priority."

As the pandemic progressed and it became clear that extra laboratory staff were needed to meet demand, Ian and his team took on the task of retraining retired NHS employees who were being called back into service.

Ian then began working with the NHS National COVID-19 Testing Cell to put together national online training provision.

"This is at the point of launch now. We have participants across England who are joining this programme, new entrants to pathology laboratories. We're providing them with a whole range of professional practice training so again we can ensure they are safe and that the results they are producing are safe.

"It's really effective. It means that the people on the ground working in the labs can work with these new staff. We're sharing some of that teaching burden with

them so that they aren't distracted from doing their jobs. Hopefully that means safe, effective results going out nice and quickly."

Ian says NHS England came to Staffordshire University to provide the online training because of its reputation across the NHS for its apprenticeship programme.

"They came to us knowing we could provide this online blended learning delivery. We were only too willing to step forward."

Ian says the online training is due to run for the next few years to ensure laboratories are well staffed for the future.

"Obviously the need for testing will carry on, certainly into the medium term," he says, "We need to make sure that we're safe and we need to make sure that the NHS system is safe.

"Despite vaccinations and all the really brilliant stuff, we need to have that resilience to make sure it's still capable of responding."

Ian believes the pandemic has reminded people of the importance of the work that happens out of public view in laboratories.

He adds: "The diagnostic side of things can get a little bit forgotten. It's certainly come to the fore with COVID-19.

"They are also trying to maintain service as usual as much as possible - so cancer diagnoses, blood transfusions, all of those things have to keep going.

"Although COVID-19 is a massive part of the work for laboratories, it's on top of the work they are already doing. The stress that they are under is pretty intense.

"It's good that we've been able to highlight the profession and it's good that we've been able to pull out some of the positives about what laboratories are actually doing in the background."



DR ARTHUR HOSIE

As a microbiologist and course director of Biological Sciences at Staffordshire University, Dr Arthur Hosie has become something of a media

personality during the pandemic.

His expert opinions have been sought across radio and television and his contribution was officially recognised by the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire.

“When the local media contacted the University asking for a volunteer to speak I put myself forward and it snowballed from there,” he says. “I’ve done more than 140 radio interviews now, both for local media but also further afield.”

Back in December 2019 Arthur told his final year students that he was expecting a pandemic to come very soon.

“I didn’t realise just how true these words were,” he says. “As the news was breaking from Wuhan the students were preparing for an exam where they had to write about emerging infections and diseases.”

Arthur has been sharing his expert opinions on everything from border closures and lockdown to PPE.

“I started off by talking about whether we should be

concerned and then perhaps how we should be responding. As a general microbiologist I’ve got an overarching view not just of public health but also of molecular biology, vaccine development and vaccine testing.

“It’s difficult to just focus on the science and not the politics, but I’ve managed it so far.”

One of the questions he is most commonly asked is when we might finally be free of COVID-19, so of course Horizon magazine had to ask too. His answer may not please everyone.

“It’s very difficult to tell and of course the virus may adapt and change. I think when we talk about being free of this it depends whether we’re talking about it at a local level in the UK or whether we’re thinking about global freedom,” he says.

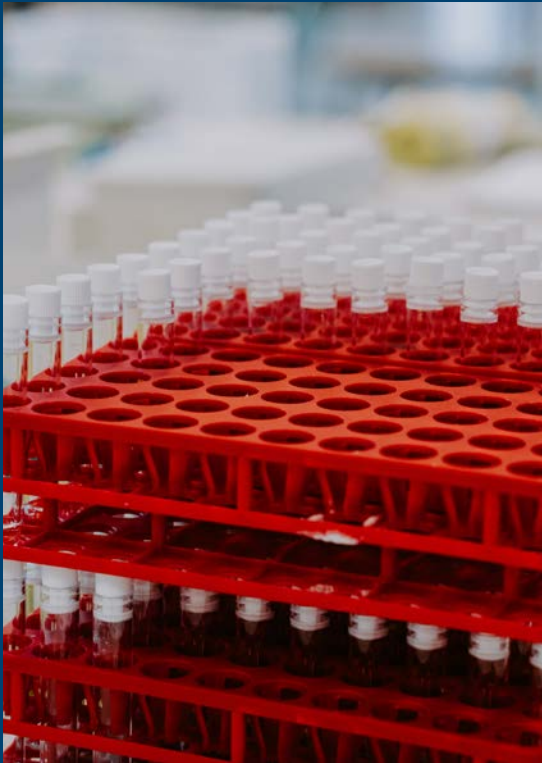
“I think we may have this coronavirus in circulation for many many years but of course if we can actually get an immune response through the vaccination programme then we should begin to get back to normal perhaps towards the end of this year.

“But then when you think about getting back to normal in the UK you have to think about protecting the world internationally and making sure that other people are vaccinated, especially if they are going to get involved in global travel.”

He adds: “It’s an important part of a scientist’s role to make sure we are not just keeping all the knowledge to ourselves and our students but that we are sharing it with people, especially at times of need such as a pandemic.”



Dr Arthur Hosie gives his expert opinion during a TV news appearance.



Staffordshire University students have been working in laboratories throughout the pandemic.



PROFESSOR SIAN GRIFFITHS OBE

An honorary doctor of Staffordshire University and former chair of Staffordshire University Centre for Health and Development, Sian Griffiths's expert opinion has been sought

by public health bodies and the media throughout the pandemic.

An expert on global public health, she co-chaired the 2003 SARS inquiry for the Hong Kong Government. She is also a member of both the Board of Public Health England and the Board of Public Health Wales.

"SARS, of course, is a coronavirus, so my experience from Hong Kong, having chaired the enquiry and then working in Hong Kong, enabled me to understand what the pandemic might mean or how we might get into a pandemic from the first outbreak in Wuhan," she says.

Sian has been giving media commentary as the pandemic has progressed and explaining the impact of developments around the world.

"When policy comes out I talk to the media about what's behind the change in policy and what the implications are."

Sian says media outlets are always asking for her long term predictions of how the pandemic will play out, but that they are incredibly difficult to give.

"We know that viruses mutate," she says. "We know that sometimes the mutation is benign and then sometimes it can cause more problems. The UK is really lucky because we have the capacity to do genomic sequencing and in fact we do about 50% of the genomic sequencing across the world, which is just amazing."

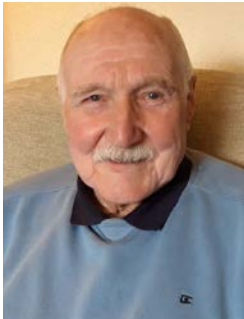
Sian says the world can learn many lessons from SARS. "We know from SARS that you have to be prepared. If you look at Hong Kong and some other countries in the Far East who have had SARS, they were much readier for COVID-19 than we were.

"The population was readier, the healthcare system was readier, the border controls were put into place much quicker.

"If you look at what we learnt from SARS, we emphasised in our report that the response needs to be global, that science needs to be shared, that health systems need to have surge capacity so that they can step up to address the needs of the pandemic and provide appropriate treatment, support and care.

"We know that it's very stressful for healthcare workers and in the SARS inquiry report we talked a lot about mental health issues in pandemics. We also talked about the need for clear systems of communication to the population so that the population is able to understand why certain measures are necessary and to comply with them."

She adds: "We learnt a lot from SARS and you could say that at the start of COVID-19 perhaps the UK hadn't learnt the lessons in the same way that countries like South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan had. They were able to step up the response more quickly."



DR DEREK WARDLE

An 82-year-old retired engineer, Dr Derek Wardle has invented a method of sterilising previously single-use PPE so that it can be reused

safely by NHS staff.

Derek, who recently completed his third degree at Staffordshire University, perfected his invention using a wheelie bin and an old tumble dryer under his carport at home.

He hopes it will save money and resources while also cutting down on the quantity of PPE sent to landfill.

By using a particular wavelength of UV, Derek was able to generate the gas ozone, which could be used to kill traces of the COVID-19 virus before quickly dissipating.

Unable to find a sealable cabinet due to coronavirus restrictions, Derek used his wheelie bin and UV lights to conduct experiments to give him proof of concept. This showed that it is possible to sterilise rigid PPE, such as visors, if stacked in an ozonated enclosure. After the first lockdown the test runs were successfully repeated in the laboratory using a purpose-built cabinet.

Derek used the same method to look into sterilising PPE clothing such as gowns, aprons and masks.

"It's daft how simple and how effective it is," he says. "I don't want any money for this, I've done it on a purely voluntary basis."

Derek is currently trying to organise third party tests at an independent laboratory, and believes his invention could save millions of pounds.

Derek completed his PhD at Staffordshire University in 2019 following on from a BA in Business Studies in 1992 and an MSc in Engineering in 2011.

As COVID-19 postponed his third official graduation ceremony, he hired a cap and gown and dressed up for his own private graduation in his garden.

"It was fantastic," he says. "I thought that at my age I could pop my clogs and only get it posthumously, so I did it myself."



PROFESSOR NACHIAPPAN CHOCKALINGAM

A field ventilator developed with help from Professor Nachiappan Chockalingam, the Director of Staffordshire University's Centre

for Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Technologies, will help to save lives in developing countries.

The low-cost ventilator uses a windscreen wiper motor, cam and lever system and a standard ambulance bag to ventilate the patient. It's designed to run in remote parts of the world on battery, solar panels, wind turbines or mains power.

Nachiappan, a liveryman with the Worshipful Company of Engineers, played a pivotal role in taking the product from idea to testing in just three weeks.

The initial concept was his but it has now been worked on by around 50 people in five countries around the globe.

The technology was designed with COVID-19 patients in mind, but can be used for any patient in need of ventilation.

"If we can save one life then we have achieved our aim," says Nachiappan. "We've all given our time for this project. It isn't about a commercial product, it's about saving lives."

"This could be used in quite a lot of trauma cases. There are quite a lot of lung diseases that need ventilation, it's not just about the pandemic or really acute conditions, it could even be used during childbirth. People are losing their lives because of a lack of ventilators."

"We sincerely hope that field ventilators will be taken up. It isn't about replacing hospital ventilators, it's short term use to keep patients alive."

Nachiappan is currently awaiting legal approval for the use of the field ventilators in Nigeria. The ventilators are also being tested on human subjects at Staffordshire University.



PROFESSOR KAREN RODHAM

Since the first lockdown in March 2020, Professor of Health Psychology Karen Rodham spent a year sewing a felt image each day to help deal with anxiety and to make others smile.

She says: "I could see lockdown coming, that this situation was going to be with us for some time and that it was probably going to be anxiety-inducing. So I began to think about coping strategies and thought it would be good to learn something different.

"I STARTED DABBLING WITH FELT AND TRYING TO SEW BECAUSE I KNOW THAT WHEN I USE MY HANDS I'M NOT ENGAGING THE WORRY PART OF MY BRAIN AND I HAVE TO BE IN THE MOMENT."

"I started dabbling with felt and trying to sew because I know that when I use my hands I'm not engaging the worry part of my brain and I have to be in the moment."

It became part of Karen's daily routine to capture a moment from each day in felt and she has been sharing her 'Roddestries' on social media. While working from home, this mindful practice at the end of the day has also acted as a boundary between work and home life.

Since her first embroidered image of the 'What If Monster' being put back in its box, Karen has shared candid reflections on her life, ranging from the laugh out loud to the political and the personal.

Family, friends, George the cat and even strangers feature in her hand sewn stories which now number more than 250.

"I decided to share the images on Twitter in the hope they would provide a moment of light-hearted distraction for anyone who stumbled upon them. I think if you are having a bad day or if something happens that is really tough then I think it's ok to share it as well as just the fun, silly things.

"I've been quite taken aback by the reaction. It has been heart-warming and surprising to learn that it is having a positive impact and resonating with people."

Karen finally brought her Roddestries to an end in March 2021, on the anniversary of the date they began.



RAISING FUNDS, BROADENING HORIZONS

The past 18 months have been incredibly difficult for many students but Staffordshire University's Horizon Fund has been able to help financially. We found out more about the vital work of this long-term project.



When Staffordshire University started its Horizon Fund in 2013 the aim was to raise £1 million over four years. That total has now been reached numerous times over, with hundreds of students helped along the way.

The current target of £4 million over five years is on track – but it's important to remember that the Horizon Fund is about much more than accumulating money. It's about making a very real difference for current Staffordshire University students.

The Horizon Fund enables the University to offer opportunity awards, scholarships and bursaries ranging in value from £20 to £2,000.

Often used for added extras required for courses, the funds have been needed more than ever during the pandemic as Samantha Nuttall, Senior Development and Alumni Relations Officer at the University, explains.

"We're aware that the charity sector has been badly hit because of

COVID-19, but the people who need help from the Horizon Fund need it even more than ever.

"In normal times students use this money for additional course costs such as trips or art and design materials. It fills a funding gap for those people.

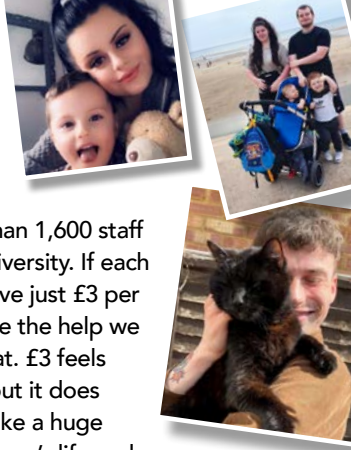
"Because of the pandemic recipients are now using that money to buy a laptop or in some instances they might have had to use it to buy a dining table so that they have somewhere to study.

"Many of our students have children so that table might be a study space, a school space, a dining space and everything else that comes with it.

"We are helping our students to complete their studies and obtain the degree they are striving for."

Samantha personally donates the equivalent of the cost of a coffee and cake each month, which she says she doesn't miss from her salary yet she knows it's making a very real difference.

"We have more than 150,000



alumni and more than 1,600 staff at Staffordshire University. If each of those people gave just £3 per month then imagine the help we could offer with that. £3 feels like nothing to us but it does add up and can make a huge difference to someone's life and the outcome of their course."

Staffordshire University is not the only university to call on its alumni for contributions, but rather than funding buildings or future developments it's using these donations to help ensure opportunities are available for all students regardless of their financial situation.

"The Horizon Fund ensures no one feels left out or excluded," adds Samantha. "Holding down a part-time job while studying can be very difficult for people on some courses, and the Horizon Fund is here to help."

Giving money isn't the only way you can help the Horizon Fund and support future graduates - you could also create opportunities or give the gift of your time.

- Perhaps you could give a student talk or guest lecture about your industry or career journey. You could share your top tips in a blog or video, become a judge for a University event e.g. GradEx.
- Could your business or organisation offer a work placement, internship or other employment opportunity? Perhaps you could offer a scholarship, sponsorship or opportunity funds to inspire others.
- Maybe you could set a live brief for students to meet, be it a research project, logo design, an event to plan or a business problem to solve.

The only limit to the possibilities is your imagination.

If you would like to donate to the Horizon Fund by making a regular monthly donation or giving a one-off amount, then it couldn't be easier. Simply visit giving.staffs.ac.uk to find out how.

"I have successfully delivered 10 babies into this world so far. Only another 30 to go to complete my degree. The bursary enabled me to purchase much-needed literature and some new comfy shoes, 12 hour shifts require some comfort! This money is helping me to continue my studies without worrying too much about the those little extras that I need. Thank you."

Tina Lewis

BSc (Hons) Midwifery Practice, recipient of the Kirsty and Ernesto Bertarelli Foundation bursary.

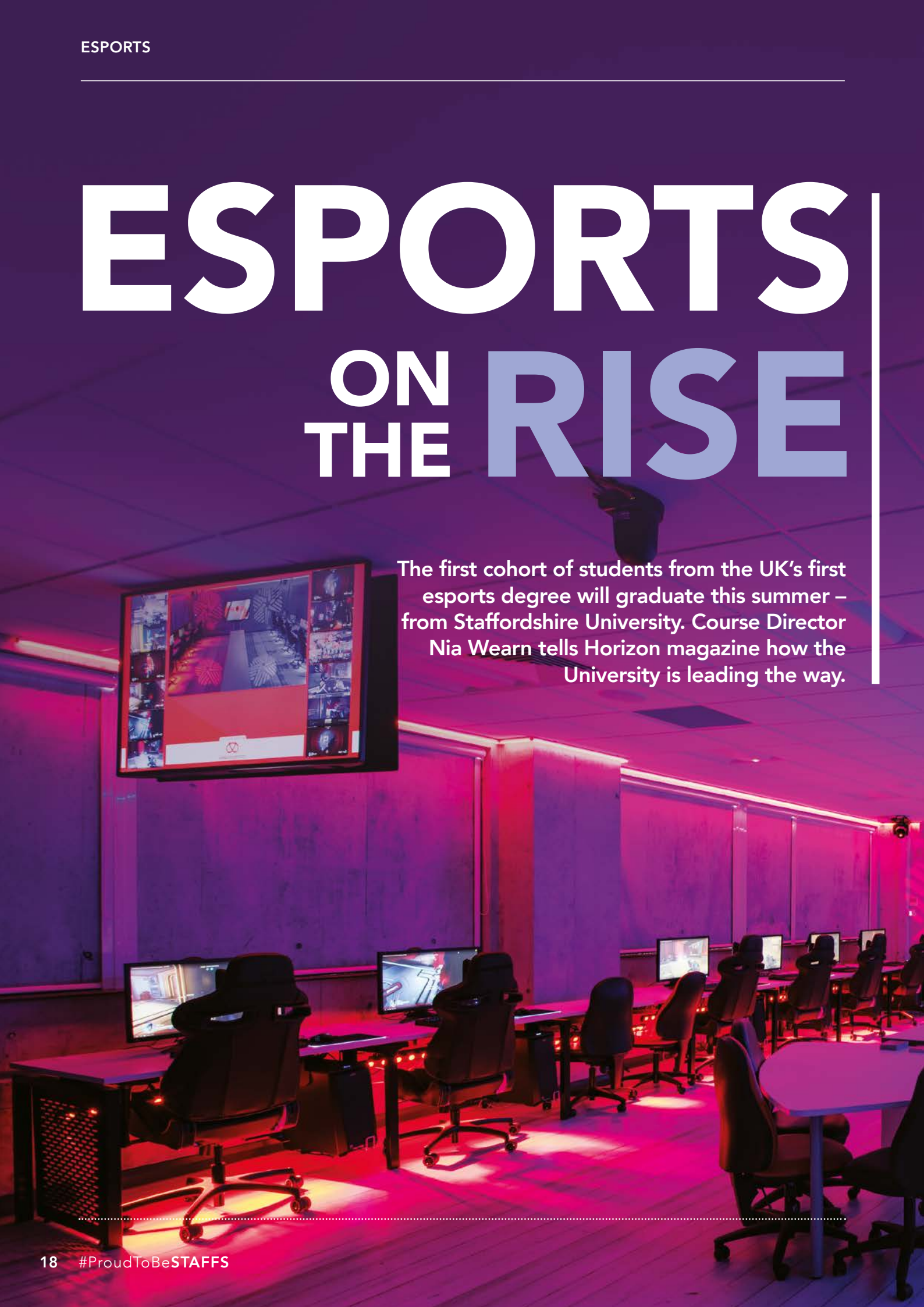
Staffordshire University's Development and Alumni Relations Team would love to hear from anyone who would like to support current students.

Call 01782 294942, email developmentoffice@staffs.ac.uk or visit giving.staffs.ac.uk



ESPORTS ON THE RISE

The first cohort of students from the UK's first esports degree will graduate this summer – from Staffordshire University. Course Director Nia Wearn tells Horizon magazine how the University is leading the way.



When the UK's esports industry challenged higher education to produce graduates with the skills required to work in the fast growing sector, it was Staffordshire University that stepped up to the plate.

It launched the country's first esports degree course, which is also believed to be amongst the first around the globe.

Now, that first intake of 72 esports undergraduate students is set to be released into the world of work, with many already securing jobs in an industry thirsty for fresh talent.

"We have students who have already lined up jobs working behind the scenes running esports events, working in moderation, marketing and broadcasting," says Nia, Course Director for Esports, Game Studies and Communities.

"They're acting as runners, they're working with content creation, tournament design. Every element that the industry needs people involved in, we have elements on our course where you can see the students picking up the specialities.

"When events pivoted to being online last year we also then followed suit in making sure that our students are ready, capable and experienced in running a variety of online esports events and taking the helm in all of the different elements of that."

Of course the esports course wasn't simply created from scratch, but rather builds on Staffordshire

University's long-standing reputation for games courses.

Nia says: "Although it's a new course, it's not new for Staffordshire University to be engaging with the latest technology or trends within interactive entertainment or with games as a whole.

"ALTHOUGH IT'S A NEW COURSE, IT'S NOT NEW FOR STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY TO BE ENGAGING WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY OR TRENDS WITHIN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT"

"We obviously are building on an incredibly strong set of games courses. We have a really strong and well-developed department which esports now sits in.

"It is a very natural progression for us to be looking at this course and how we start to help to fill a skills gap that has already been recognised within the UK and global esports and games industry.

"So we took pointers from UKIE, The Association for UK Interactive Entertainment, who set out a challenge to higher education institutes a number of years ago now, to start to incorporate esports into their courses."

As far as Staffordshire

University is concerned it was challenge accepted.

"We started with a module, testing the water to see the student engagement. When that came in and we saw that students really wanted to build this kind of knowledge base and have practice in running esports events then we took that forward to the full degree that we have now.

"We became the first university in the UK with a full undergraduate and postgraduate esports teaching programme.

"From what we can see we were more or less leading the way globally in having a dedicated esports title for a BA.

It's an incredibly rare thing that we have these very specific job titles that our students will be having. It's the job title that will help them unlock careers in areas within the games industry."

Working so closely with the esports trade body from the very beginning meant that the course could be carefully tailored to maximise the employability of graduates.

"We've certainly kept a very close eye on how jobs have changed and what elements are required in the jobs that are being advertised," says Nia.

"We keep a close eye on job descriptions and roles and how they adapt, which softwares they need, which field specialisms employers are asking for and making sure those elements are in the modules that we deliver to our students."

As well as working closely with gaming trade bodies, the department's own staff have experience of working in the esports industry on various campaigns and events.

By its nature the esports course is very practical and hands on but it does include more academic teaching including the likes of esports culture, sport integrity and community management.

"We understand that these are students who can adapt and research and understand large changes and large groups of consumers and players as well as being able to practically run events," says Nia.

Such is its dominance in the field that Nia says most graduate recruits into esports over the next few years are likely to have a Staffordshire University degree on their CV.

"The UK esports industry is huge so there's certainly a good groundswell of companies taking note of the fact that we have graduates with esports in the degree title.

"A lot of our postgraduates have worked in games companies because they've understood delivering products to large groups of players.

"Already there is an amazing establishment of Staffordshire University games alumni, so pulling that into esports we can foresee that there will be a lot of Staffordshire University graduates in and amongst the industry as it matures."

Like the leaders of any successful course, Nia and her team are determined not to rest on their laurels but rather to ensure the learning they deliver continues to adapt to the requirements of the industry.

"We're starting to look now at how we can adapt. We're looking now at maybe how we can finesse the course a little bit so that there's more specific routes coming through and I think that'll form a really exciting offering to prospective students.

"They'll see that this isn't just a one off thing, that this is something that we're building on.

"We're starting to see students coming through who want to specialise in certain areas. It's a course that will continually be in flux and in development as the industry itself is.

"It needs to be to keep up with technology but also to keep up with players and trends.

"We have younger people coming in, we have children now who are very adaptive and used to esports. We have children who are used to watching and consuming YouTube as entertainment as opposed to just a knowledge resource."

Nia adds: "There are going to be a lot of changes coming through in the demographic of students that we have and also the demographic that we work with.

"There's a real difference in understanding the far reaching aspects of esports and understanding the positives that can come out of it. It's really exciting to see the course backing up and supporting those positive initiatives."

DID YOU KNOW?

- Esports can be studied at Stoke-on-Trent or at Staffordshire University's London campus.
- The three year course can be combined with a placement or foundation year.
- Students have access to a specialist esports lab and a pro gamer training facility.
- Esports students can join competitive societies including games such as League of Legends, DOTA2, Hearthstone, Counter Strike, Overwatch and Super Smash Bros and compete in events in the UK and overseas.
- 72 students were accepted onto the first year of the esports course, which increased to 107 in the second year.



SO WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

- Esports is short for electronic sports and involves computer game players competing against one another.
- Coronavirus restrictions allowing, esports tournaments take place in front of huge crowds in large capacity arenas around the world. Some players are famous in the esports world and compete in teams alongside teammates.
- Top esports players dedicate many hours to training, which is perhaps not too surprising considering the prize money at stake at some tournaments can run to many thousands of pounds.
- Esports is a multi-billion-pound global industry, with some tournaments attracting millions of online viewers around the world.
- The IOC has considered introducing esports to the Olympic Games. While it has not taken that step yet it hasn't been ruled out for the future.

JUST ONE SUCCESS STORY

Dani Morgan may have known 'little to nothing' about the world of esports when she started her degree course, but as a new graduate she has already secured a job in one of the fastest growing industries in the UK.



Last October the 21-year-old, from Shropshire, found herself a part-time job with AFK Creators, a UK-founded agency for streamers and talent in the gaming industry. In June she started working for the company full-time.

"To begin with I didn't really know what I wanted to study at university," she says. "I didn't even know if university was going to be right for me.

"I'd always been very academic and had always had a bit of an interest in gaming, more as a hobby than anything else. I was running out of time to decide what I wanted to do.

"I debated studying psychology and becoming a psychiatrist, but in the end I decided to do what I enjoy. Joining the UK's first esports degree in its first year was a massive leap of faith for me.

"I came in on that first day not even knowing who the big esports teams were. All my classmates were talking about things I didn't know about."

Dani has chosen to focus on the marketing and creative side of esports, which she says satisfies both the academic and creative sides of her personality.

"At AFK Creators I've been working closely with two colleagues on the marketing team. Over time I've put in more and more hours and taken more of a role in the running of marketing and social media within the business. I've been negotiating what that would look like for me going forward and sorting out my place within the company."

During the course, Dani and a fellow student staged a show match to raise funds for The Prince's Trust from the esports hub on campus. They had around 11.5 hours of content which was watched by around 100,000 people and raised around £3,000 for the charity.

For Dani, the course's real strengths include close links with the esports industry that allow students to network and make contacts.

She adds: "The lecturers have been fantastic and they're always so supportive. They're always there to support and give advice.

"A big issue with esports is unpaid work, that there are a lot of people out there who might exploit other people. The lecturers are so helpful in that area and are able to give a true insight as they have experience in the field themselves."



Behind the scenes at an esports event Dani Morgan organised during her final year.

IN A JAM



FIND OUT MORE:

WWW.STOKEONTRENTCITYCENTRE.CO.UK/GAMESJAM2021



DID YOU KNOW?

A games jam is a contest where people compete to create a video game from scratch.

The world's biggest games jam, Global Game Jam, last year attracted 48,753 participants from 118 countries in 934 locations around the world.

Staffordshire University helped to stage an event that's believed to be a world first and could launch a young games designer's career. Horizon magazine spoke to Dr Bobbie Fletcher, Head of Department, Games and Visual Effects to find out more.

They may sound like something that happens if you drop a piece of toast while playing Monopoly - but games jams have become a hugely popular global phenomenon. Now Staffordshire University helped to stage what is believed to be the world's first city centre games jam.

Staffordshire University's Games Department, headed up by Dr Bobbie Fletcher, joined forces with Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Business Improvement District to stage Stoke on Trend Games Jam.

It saw people right across the globe offered the chance to design a game based on the city of Stoke-on-Trent. Members of the public were then able to access and play the games by visiting specific places in the city centre.

A potentially life-changing prize will see the overall winner or winners work with Staffordshire University to refine their game then launch it commercially.

"It all came about as part of a plan to build on Stoke-on-Trent's national reputation as a centre for games and esports," says Bobbie.

"We've had really successful games courses in Staffordshire University since 2004, when we started with 55 students. We have nearly 2,000 students on games courses now, considerably more than any other university in the UK.

"We've been doing games jams for years at the University and have had some of the biggest games jams in Europe, but what we haven't done before is take it into the city centre."

Bobbie believes that this was the first games jam in the world to be based around heritage locations within a city centre, with the aim of encouraging people to explore key sites while making and playing video games.

Stoke on Trend Games Jam officially started on May 29 where a list of eight diversifiers - locations or objects on which the games must be based - were announced.

Individuals or teams of up to four then had a week to put their games together. Participants had to be over the age of 16 and in full time education, leaving the contest open for people at schools, colleges and universities all around the world.

People had to head into the city to play the games once they were publicly released on June 19, by using QR codes at each of the game locations. However there was nothing to stop people based anywhere around the globe from entering by creating a game based on Stoke-on-Trent.

People who played the games were able to vote for their favourites and then a panel of expert judges will choose an overall winner.

The money-can't-buy prize will see the winning team or individual work with experts to hothouse their game for six weeks before it is launched on a commercial games licence. The prize will even include financial help towards accommodation costs if needed.

"This could launch someone's career or equally it could inspire them to go on to college or university," says Bobbie. "It would also be really lovely if it inspired people to visit Stoke-on-Trent while making their game to get inspiration."

Laura Morris, general manager of the city's Cineworld Cinema, project managed the games jam on behalf of the BID.

She says: "This will attract a younger demographic to the city centre and engage with students at universities and colleges. It'll engage with people outside of the city who are into games."

Jonathan Bellamy, Chairman of Stoke-on-Trent City Centre BID, hopes the game jam will be just the start of a series of collaborations between the University and the city centre.

He says: "Engaging the next generation is vital for the future of our city centres. So we're looking to use games to converge their world with the attractions, heritage and businesses of our city centre. Something we believe may be a first in the country.

"We couldn't ask for a better partner than Staffordshire University - the best provider of games and digital courses in the country, by far.

"I'm really excited about seeing the winning game launched as a commercial app later this year - bringing together youth, digital technology, heritage and tourism in a unique and compelling way."

Computer games companies have been known to stage games jams for their own staff to spark creativity and inspire new products.

Games jams have been held to create board games as well as video games.

Games jam success stories include a game called Goat Simulator that generated more than \$12million in revenue.



WELCOME TO THE INNOVATION ENTERPRISE ZONE



WHAT IS AN INNOVATION ENTERPRISE ZONE (IEZ)?

- The latest round of University Enterprise Zones (UEZ) was announced by the Government in September 2019, with the project first unveiled by David Cameron in 2013.
- Staffordshire University's IEZ is one of 20 University Enterprise Zones launched across the UK with £20 million of investment from Research England, each with its own particular focus.
- The aim is to give businesses access to academic expertise to help them to grow, create new jobs and stimulate the economy.



Staffordshire University is helping the regional economy to bounce back from the effects of COVID-19 with the creation of a multi-million-pound Innovation Enterprise Zone (IEZ). Horizon magazine finds out what it's all about.

Eligible businesses are being offered access to Staffordshire University's cutting-edge facilities, research expertise and student talent to help drive innovative solutions, create new jobs and stimulate the region's economy.

The IEZ was launched last November, when it was announced that more than £10 million of funded support for businesses in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership had been secured.

The IEZ is one of 20 University Enterprise Zones (UEZs) around the UK aimed at helping small and medium sized enterprises in the hope that bringing together academic, business and student brains will kickstart innovation and have a hugely positive

impact on the economy. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Martin Jones says: "We see this as part of our civic responsibility. We have an important part to play in creating high-value jobs that our graduates can apply for, to drive innovation and growth in specialist areas and provide SMEs with a vital stepping-stone to succeed.

"The IEZ is our ecosystem in that it is bringing together the businesses, the technology, research and academic expertise in an environment that allows ideas to flourish and innovation to grow. It's important we act now to help the region's economic recovery from COVID-19."

INVESTMENT IN IEZ FACILITIES

Research England funding has enabled Staffordshire University to transform the Mellor Building on the main Stoke-on-Trent campus, with a brand-new incubation office space and a shared hatchery for start-up companies looking to rent a desk.

It has also funded new innovation labs which are equipped with the very latest advanced materials and advanced manufacturing technology for use by companies wanting to design, prototype and test new products.

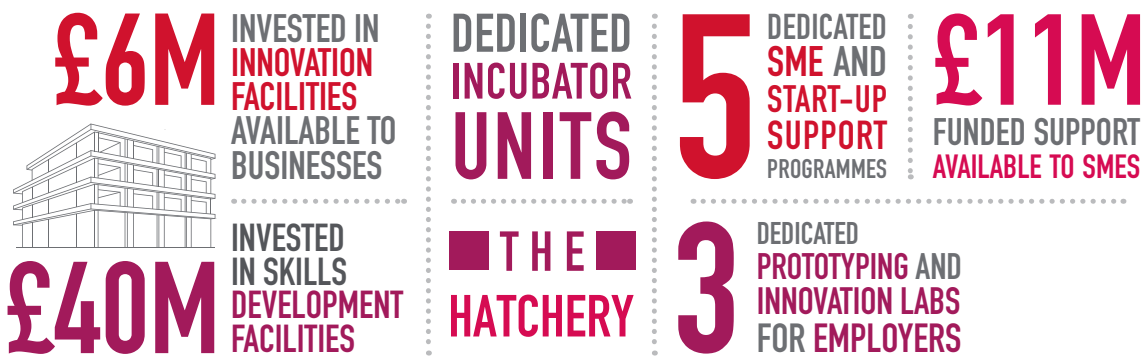
INVESTMENT INTO IEZ SERVICES

The IEZ includes a £720,000 Creative Lab, a creative workspace designed to stimulate collaboration and to spark new ideas for products and start-up businesses.
The Creative Lab connects students and graduates with

academics, entrepreneurs and businesses to boost innovation in digital, creative, advanced manufacturing and advanced materials. It comprises collaborative space where new ideas can be worked into designs, interactive screens to enable high-resolution visualisation of products and designs which can then be brought to life using the IEZ facilities.



INVESTMENT IN NUMBERS



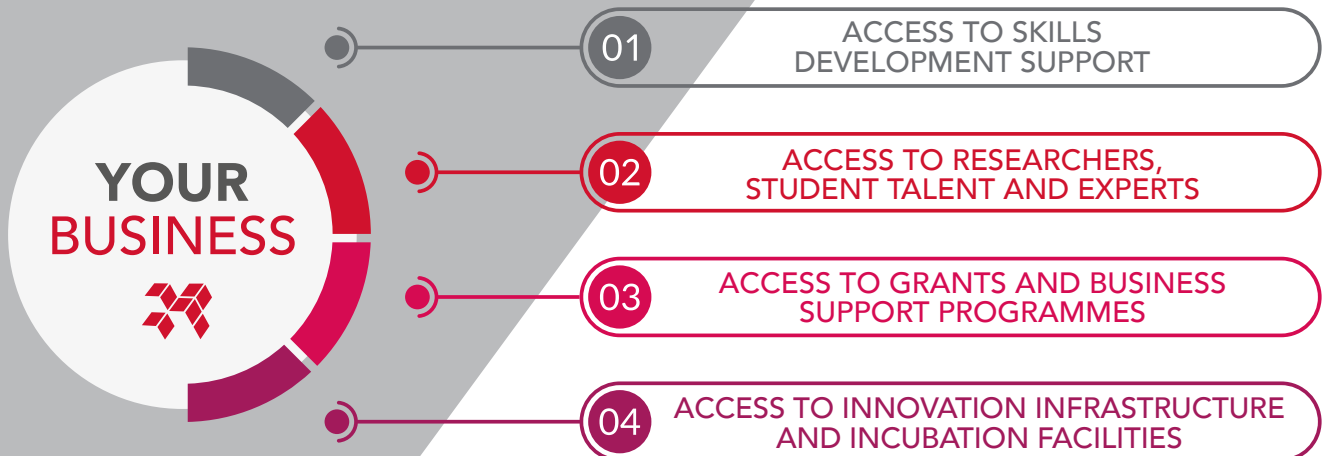
SOME OF OUR PARTNERS:



WHAT COULD THE IEZ DO FOR ME?

While the IEZ does offer services that support larger organisations, it isn't necessary to be a large, established business to take advantage of the facilities and services

available. Start-ups, SMEs, sole traders and even people who haven't got to the point of setting their business up yet will be made welcome - as many of the facilities on offer have been put in place specifically for that scale of business.





FUNDED SUPPORT FOR STAFFORDSHIRE SMES

Drive innovative solutions for the intelligent mobility market

Do you have an innovative idea that could transform transport or logistics industries, revolutionise city infrastructures or improve end-user experience? Or, maybe you're a business that works with drones, robots or autonomous vehicles? You could be eligible to access funded business support to help turn these ideas into real life products and services!

Product developing and prototyping

If you have a great idea for a product that you want to create or an existing product you want to improve, then you could gain access to state-of-the-art innovation laboratories to hone your design, create prototypes and put them to the test.

Flexible learning and CPD

Access up to 200 hours of free learning for each staff member in areas such as business and leadership, cyber security, artificial intelligence, sustainability and many more. Learning is delivered in manageable bitesize modules that are 4 – 6 weeks in length and can be used as recognition of prior learning and a progression pathway to a wide range of high-level courses.



PART FUNDED SUPPORT FOR LARGE BUSINESSES

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)

A KTP is a three-way partnership between your business, Staffordshire University and a recently qualified graduate, known as the associate.

Up to 67% funded depending on the size of your company, a KTP offers a company the chance to collaborate on a business opportunity, idea or innovation and supports companies to drive innovation through the development of new digital products, processes and services.

MODERN OFFICE SPACE THAT WILL ACCELERATE YOUR BUSINESS

The IEZ Incubator and Accelerator houses businesses in a modern office space, offering a stepping-stone for companies that are in the early stages of development or established businesses looking to relocate, downsize, or set up a hybrid office.

Located on Staffordshire University's main Stoke-on-Trent campus. For a competitive price, you can rent a:

- Desk in a shared office
- Small private office, accommodating 3-4 people
- Large private office, accommodating up to 6 people



INNOVATION
ENTERPRISE ZONE

To find out how Staffordshire University can help and support your business, get in touch today:
employers@staffs.ac.uk | 0800 169 2148

THE FUTURE IS

Staffordshire University is working towards a sustainable future, both on campus and in the wider community. From ambitions to be a carbon neutral campus by 2030 to encouraging grass verges to grow wild, Ecology Lecturer Dr Elle Atkins explains some of the University's green infrastructure work.



GREEN



Dr Elle Atkins

Sustainability is at the heart of all of Staffordshire University's future plans and projects. Whether it's changing a light fitting or designing a new building, the environmental impact of every action is carefully considered.

Ecology Lecturer Dr Elle Atkins and her students are increasingly being called upon to give their expert opinions and to help lead environmental projects both on campus and in the community.

From organising biodiversity volunteers to planning a green week and working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to find grass verges that can safely be allowed to grow wild, Elle has a hand in many projects.

It has enabled her to take ecology out of the lecture theatre and into the working world, with her students assisting with live projects and even advising the University's own Executive team.

"The University is very supportive of them. We're doing biodiversity net gain surveys, which is something they learn about in their lectures, but we're giving them the opportunity to do that for all the new developments that are happening on the campus," she says.

"The last one we did was for The Catalyst building that's currently being built. We did a biodiversity net gain survey and considered what we could do around that to improve the biodiversity.

"It was pitched to the Executive team at the University, who liked those ideas. We were asked to pitch it to the architects who have since taken some of our ideas forward and they are actually going to be made on the ground.

"The expertise of the students has been used by the University really effectively and we're making positive changes for biodiversity. It was something like a 47% net gain, a really big bonus for the biodiversity of the project.

"The students are all working as teams and are seen as ecologists by their fellow students and staff," she says. "It really does boost their confidence. The Executive team are listening to what they're saying, as they know they're the experts on this."

NURSERY AND FOREST SCHOOL

Staffordshire University has revealed exciting plans for a £4.4million Woodlands Day Nursery and Forest School.

The new facilities will offer places for the children of students, staff and the local community when they open in 2022.

More than doubling the nursery’s existing capacity, the new provision will see 100 full day-care places for children aged up to five years. It will also have the capacity to provide childcare and education for children aged from five to 12 years outside of term time.

Sustainability, digital technology and nature are at the forefront of the new build, which aims to further the University’s commitment to creating a family-friendly campus.

The nursery provision will include a forest school facility to further develop links with local schools and provide community participation opportunities. Aimed at children between the ages of three and seven years, the forest school will enable children to experience outdoor learning opportunities such as identifying nature, play-based learning, den building and forest art. Through the forest school children will have the opportunity to develop

a wide range of skills and knowledge outside of the traditional classroom environment.

Andrew Proctor, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Digital) at Staffordshire University, says: “We’re delighted to see work on our nursery and forest school commence in the new year. The new facilities will build upon the excellent care that we provide in our existing nursery, whilst also allowing more children across our community the opportunity to gain access to high-quality early-years education.”

“The addition of a forest school means we’re able to deliver a unique experience. Children will have the chance to safely explore outdoor green spaces whilst also learning all about the world around them. We believe that the nursery will truly offer the best of both the digital and physical world, creating an engaging and exciting learning environment for children to be part of.”

The building is expected to become the first net-zero carbon facility on campus having been designed using passive and highly efficient technologies for heating, cooling, and ventilation.

*Source: <https://forestschoolassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>



WHAT IS A FOREST SCHOOL?

Our new nursery and forest school aims to bring the forest to our City Campus in Stoke-on-Trent. The Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth. It is a long-term programme that will support play, exploration and supported risk taking as well as develop confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.*



APPLY FOR A PLACE

We’re now taking applications to be part of the first intake for the nursery and forest school in January 2022. Find out how to apply at: www.staffs.ac.uk/about/facilities/nursery

Just hearing about the list of projects Elle is involved with is exhausting, but she stresses that students themselves are working on many of them.

The ERDF SUNRISE Project, for example, sees Elle and students working alongside a team from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and other organisations to rewild a stretch of the River Trent that runs through the campus.

"We're reprofiling the river to get it a little bit more like it used to be," she says. "The rivers in Stoke-on-Trent tend to be really straight and have muddy bottoms, and that's not very good for wildlife.

"If we can get those bends and ripples, quick-filling areas, slow-filling areas and all those different habitats into the river then that's going to improve biodiversity.

"The idea is also to get people out and experiencing these often quite attractive outdoor environments where they can experience nature, hear the birds sing and see animals and birds flying around. That would be really good to help with wellbeing."

The University has a campus nature reserve next to the river where Elle, students and members of the University grounds team are helping to improve habitats.

"We've trying to improve the value and potential the nature reserve has for wildlife and for people to access it," says Elle. "We think that will improve people's health and wellbeing as well."

The Wild Staffs Project, meanwhile, sees Elle and students trying to extend and connect habitats around the city of Stoke-on-Trent.

"Stoke-on-Trent is quite a green city in terms of the amount of green space it has but not necessarily all of that is well managed for wildlife.

"So what we're trying to do is connect all those habitats together through little stepping stones so that we've got a great area for bees, butterflies, small mammals and birds to make their homes. But also, they can use those habitats and move through the city, so they've got an opportunity to use all of those habitats and therefore that's more likely to increase the population of those species.

"That will give us more opportunity to see that wildlife but in addition we think that the habitats that we're creating like wildflower meadows, biodiverse hedgerows, different native species and lots of different flowering and fruiting trees are going to add colour and attractiveness to the landscape.

"So that's hopefully going to improve the aesthetics and will also help with pollution capture and lowering the heat island impact of the city."

Staff and students are making their own bird boxes from recycled wood from campus, creating habitat hotels and devising real world, practical uses for the theories taught in lectures.

Elle is working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to identify grass verges around the city that can safely be

HEDGEHOG-FRIENDLY CAMPUS



Staffordshire University is working towards hedgehog accreditation with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

Hedgehogs are in decline nationally so university campuses are being encouraged to become environments where they can thrive.

To achieve accreditation the University needs to demonstrate positive action and achievements to protect and promote this native species.

Dr Elle Atkins says: "We think the hedgehog is a good species to promote, but also the habitats we're promoting for hedgehogs are going to be beneficial for other species as well.

"We're putting in hedgerows and wildflower buffer strips along hedgerows so they can move freely through those habitats and access more feeding grounds safely.

"That's something we want to get the local community as well as the University and students involved with."

A number of Staffordshire University ecology students are currently working on projects around improving habitats for hedgehogs, using the campus as an example.

As part of that they'll be keeping track of hedgehog numbers and finding out whether the hedgehog population increases as a result of the changes.

allowed to grow wild to provide wildlife habitats.

"They're really open to the idea," she says. "We're going to make sure we're doing it in the right places, so it doesn't cause dangers to traffic etc., but the city council is really on board with it. We have asked for some areas and they've said yes, go for it. It's going to be a really good collaboration."

Elle also planned The Great Green Gathering, aimed at educating the local community about small changes they can make which would have a big effect for biodiversity and sustainability. A virtual event in 2020 due to COVID-19, the team is still hoping to be able to stage a face-to-face event this summer if restrictions allow.

The aim is to make it the University's first carbon neutral event by planting at least 100 metres of hedgerow to take up carbon from the atmosphere.

The University is aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030 and is trying to reduce its carbon footprint in many different ways.

"We're looking at alternative sources of energy," says Elle. "Every time we do a new addition to the campus,

every time we change a lightbulb. We're going to change the fitting to change it for something more sustainable.

"We're not doing it straight away because obviously that's a waste of the products that are there. It is much more sustainable to use things until they reach the end of their life and then replace them, rather than wasting things.

"We're also upcycling as many things as we can. We are going to upcycle office chairs, doors and so on, and we're going to have a little plaque to say that it's been upcycled.

"We're really looking at how our waste is disposed of and how we can improve that. There's a great team working on all of these things."

The University is looking at its suppliers and making sure it's buying sustainable goods and resources wherever possible.

Transport onto campus has a big impact on the University's carbon footprint and it's looking at how it can reduce that by introducing greener ways for people to access campus.

Elle adds: "We're also trying to educate students to make positive changes for sustainability, making it easier for them to recycle, promoting that good practice. We're trying to educate them and then allow them to educate the wider community."

RIVER RESTORATION

A 450-metre stretch of the River Trent has been re-naturalised, adding another link in the chain for a joined-up wildlife corridor in the region.

A straight section of the river at the University's Leek Road campus has been transformed so it naturally meanders through the site, offering a diverse and dynamic habitat for river-dwelling wildlife.

County conservation charity Staffordshire Wildlife Trust led on the construction of the new channel, which includes two river islands, shallow pools and areas of marginal wetland.

The project is part of SUNRISE, a major urban conservation initiative primarily funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which is focusing on restoring and improving natural habitats at 16 sites around Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

SUNRISE Project Manager Richard Guy, a graduate of Staffordshire University, says: "The new river channel we have created at Staffordshire University will attract a wide variety of wildlife.

"The shallower wetland areas will offer breeding and feeding places for dragonflies, damselflies, amphibians and reptiles, while the river channel itself is now a much-improved habitat for many species of fish and birds.

"This new section is just over half a mile upstream of the recently completed 500-metre river channel on the site of Stoke City FC's former Victoria Ground.

"The aim of the ERDF SUNRISE project is to improve

the River Trent as a wildlife corridor, and by re-naturalising some of the most heavily engineered sections we hope to restore thriving wildlife and make it into a place to be actively enjoyed by local people."

The ERDF SUNRISE project is funding a series of environmental improvements totalling £3.6 million across Stoke-on-Trent city and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Led by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust is delivering the majority of the habitat improvement work, with the support of other partners including the Environment Agency, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Groundwork West Midlands and the Wild Trout Trust.

Sally McGill, Staffordshire University's Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Chief Executive who is also the Executive lead for sustainability, says: "We are delighted to see work on the new river channel at the University completed and surrounding areas on campus transformed through this landmark regional project.

"As a Civic University, we are committed to achieving major change in environmental sustainability in the region through local engagement. The ERDF SUNRISE Project embodies this commitment.

"The project has laid the foundations for a much more diverse and dynamic habitat for wildlife to thrive in. We look forward to seeing the area flourish over the coming weeks and months following the environmental enhancements made as part of the project."



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS



Here we present an updated logo for the University's sustainability journey, which has been created by our in-house design team.

The aim of the logo is to incorporate the many different aspects of sustainability, not only here at the University, but within the local community and our global society. It features the physical impacts of a university, the energy and electricity needed to heat, cool and run the buildings on site and highlights the impact of consumerism and consumables (through waste and recycling). It also takes into consideration the natural environment and aims to highlight our unique location and our own nature reserve on campus.

The launch of the logo is aligned to the launch of the Sustainability Strategy and Sustainability Targets and will be used throughout the University to highlight where sustainable or low carbon actions and decisions are being made, for example, the installation of LED lights and the replacement of hand driers to more energy efficient options. It is intended to be the start of a behavioural and cultural shift for the University, and an easily recognisable logo for students and staff to identify with and celebrate making more sustainable choices.

www.staffs.ac.uk/about/environment



LONDON CALLING

It may be just two years old but Staffordshire University's satellite campus in London is already set to double in size. Horizon magazine discovers the secrets to its success.

The clue is in the name; Staffordshire University has been based in the county of Staffordshire since its early origins as a school of mining in 1906. However, in late 2018 the University decided to set up a satellite campus elsewhere in the country.

The Here East campus, based in Stratford, East London, at the site of the former broadcasting centre for the 2012 London Olympic Games, was born.

Staffordshire University London has proved to be such a success that it is already expanding in physical size, student capacity and in the range of courses offered. By this autumn the £3.5 million expansion will introduce a host of new and exciting facilities.

The campus is already home to students studying a selection of some of Staffordshire University's most sought-after courses. The expansion will pave the way for exciting new courses in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science and

Informatics, professional technologies such as FinTech, Virtual Production, Cybercrime and Fraud, and Digital Forensics and Investigation.

The campus will be nearly 22,000 sq. ft., based across three units.

Director of Staffordshire University London, Matt Brindley-Sadler, explains the decision to effectively double the size of the campus.

"There are pockets of investment and industry excellence dotted around the country and different sites were considered for the satellite campus. The north east was considered at one point, but it was decided that London would probably be the best strategic fit.

"The inaugural cohort in computer games design and

esports joined in September 2019. They're a pioneering cohort who will be going into their final year of study next year. A small cohesive group of about 30 students."

In September 2020 an Undergraduate course in Cyber Security and a Masters in Esports were added, which meant the total number of students leapt by more than 130.

Applicant numbers for courses starting in September 2021 are already more than double the number received in the previous year.



From September, Staffordshire University London will comprise three distinct areas:

- **The Production Warehouse.**
This existing space will be enhanced with a new Virtual Production suite incorporating AR, VR and motion capture tracking integrated into a virtual broadcast platform. A fully equipped post-production suite will also be added.
- **The Data Junction** is described as a mega lab featuring wireless casting and presenting facilities which reflect the very best industry facilities, plus meeting spaces and a self-serve coffee bar. This will house our growing community of computer science students and feature new cyber and networking labs.
- **The Digital Loft** includes Reload, a showpiece retro gaming café, which features innovative touch screen tables for food orders and getting live updates on activities and events. This space also features collaboration zones, a presentation space, a Recharge area and a faith room.

"We're looking at more than 250 new students joining us this September joining our progressing cohorts," says Matt.

"That's phase one of opening the campus. We're now at the stage of future development and expansion."

Matt says Create the Uncreated has become a philosophy for the London campus. "It's about giving students the safety zone to develop and create things that are not just tailored to a specific job. It's about letting people learn as many skills as they can and think about how they're going to use them.

"The collaboration we have with industry is such that we speak to industry about what developments they're producing, but we also help to influence that."

Matt says it's important to remember that Staffordshire University London may be a new campus but the courses taught are based on courses honed over many years at the Staffordshire campus.

Matt says: "We haven't built a new university in London. It is an institute that is a flagship provision that reflects our institutional commitments to future technology and future digital innovations with respect to our courses and our learning. Our ethos and driver is to be the forefront digitally connected institution across the HE sector."

In many ways Staffordshire University London is a prototype for the university campus of the future. It's been given an open plan, production zone feel which is designed to be similar to that found in industry, rather than classrooms with people sitting in rows.

"That's not how students will work," says Matt. "It's less about someone standing on a stage talking at students. We talk about lectures and workshops but they're more like mini project sessions."

For Matt, Staffordshire University London is about offering core niche courses that are different to competitors in the capital.

"We want students to have a wider range of exit opportunities and not be locked into very narrow routes into jobs."

He adds: "As our physical campus expands, we are also expanding our expertise. We will be appointing more academic staff to our teaching and research teams alongside further additions in professional and estates services roles."

Would you like to get involved with Staffordshire University London? Any alumni, particularly those who live in London, from related industries who would like to collaborate with us and/or be added to our mailing list can email dilhelpdesk@staffs.ac.uk for more information.



THE CAMERA NEVER LIES

From capturing the poses of drag queens to finding beauty in COVID-19 masks, three Staffordshire University graduates talk to Horizon magazine about the inspiration for their photography.



EL GABRIEL BROWN

El Gabriel Brown's work has featured on TV and in a book - even before she graduated.

Working as a dental nurse whilst studying, she submitted some of her work for the photography contest, Rankin's 2020. It was chosen to feature on a Sky Arts TV show about the contest and is in an accompanying book.

"We didn't know if we'd made the cut until the programme aired. I watched it over Zoom with friends and for some reason there was a time lag, so they saw it before me.

"I just heard screaming and crying when my photograph came onto the screen," she says. "It was a really special moment. I'm so proud of it because Rankin is a huge influence on me and I think what he did there was really lovely, creating this platform for people to come together and share their pandemic experiences.

The photograph was from El Gabriel's Quarantine Queens collection, a series of beauty photographs featuring people wearing face masks and crowns.

"I started it during the first lockdown. I was obviously disappointed not to be at University but I wanted to stay creative, so I started playing around at home. I had a crown as I have a young daughter, so I took a self-portrait wearing that and a mask."

"I JUST HEARD SCREAMING AND CRYING WHEN MY PHOTOGRAPH CAME ONTO THE SCREEN"

El Gabriel says boredom breeds creativity for her and feeling confined and having nowhere to go encouraged her to pick her camera up and start creating.

"I posted that first photo onto social media and got really positive feedback from friends. I thought it could make a good series so as the first lockdown started to lift, I did a lot of outdoor shooting and brought in friends.

"I ended up with a whole host of beautiful, glamorous quarantine queens. It was fun to be glamorous and do something creative."

As a dental nurse El Gabriel wears a mask and PPE daily and said: "It was nice to do something opposite to that and more fun. The lockdowns and the pandemic have been difficult and weighed heavily on everybody. To do something light-hearted and glamorous was a relief.

El Gabriel's work includes many self-portraits through which she explores her personal relationships with family members, including her relationship with her children and the breakdown of her marriage. Her degree show work included an underwater photoshoot of a 'sinking bride'.

She hopes to work in the field of portrait and fashion photography and cites Rankin and Tim Walker as strong influences.



ADINA LAWRENCE

"I LOVE TO ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE AND TO HAVE THAT CONNECTION THROUGH MY CAMERA"

A lockdown community project to help residents of a market town stay connected to key workers is just one of the commissions Adina Lawrence has won since graduating from photojournalism in 2019.

She was tasked with capturing a series of portraits of market stallholders and shopkeepers to be displayed life-sized for people venturing into the centre of Newcastle-under-Lyme during lockdown for the Familiar Faces project.

"I was given a very tight deadline but it was very enjoyable which made it easier to do," she says.

"The challenge for me was encouraging people to get involved. It took me back to my university days of being given a brief or an assignment and going out and making it happen.

"It was all about reminding people of the familiar faces they'd usually be seeing. It was good to be able to give people such as market stallholders some exposure.

"I love to engage with people and to have that connection through my camera."

Other commissions have seen Adina photographing frontline workers and mothers. She has worked with organisations including Urban Wilderness and B-Arts.

She combines her photography work with a full-time job as an education mental health practitioner within the NHS.

"Right now, it's better having a main job which I do alongside my photography. I do incorporate photography into my mental health work too though, using art as a medium for people to express themselves.

"I try to encourage art and photography groups so that people can release their stress.

"Photography is my side hustle alongside my main job. I like the freedom of being able to pick up commissions as and when I like."

Her weekends, evenings and annual leave are dedicated to photography commissions.

Diversity and awareness were central themes of Adina's photography whilst at University.

"I spent a lot of time looking at awareness and promoting diversity," she says. "I was always using flamboyant colours, always creating a fantasy feel.

"I used a lot of metaphors within my images just to make a statement. I really did enjoy playing with fashion, playing with documentary and playing with different sources of photography."



LOTTIE PARRY

The drag scene proved to be a constant source of inspiration for Lottie Parry during her photography degree.

Lottie travelled extensively around the UK to photograph drag queens, including the stars of TV show RuPaul's Drag Race UK.

"I specifically wanted to bring light to the amazing drag artists in the UK," she says. "At the time I was studying, RuPaul's Drag Race was only in the USA.

"Obviously, a lot of people knew the US scene and it was massive but not many people knew about the UK scene. I wanted to draw attention to the amazing artists that we have in the UK because I think it needs more representation."

Lottie started to go to every UK drag show she could find, where she would ask for permission to take a quick portrait photograph.

"I love portrait work. They're such beautiful people, why wouldn't people want to see them?"

"Drag, for me, just gives me so much life and energy. It seemed to work and brought me this wonderful niche in my work that was unique. Not many others were doing it at the time and it was just so exhilarating to do."

Over the course of her degree Lottie forged strong friendships and contacts within the drag queen community, which gave her the opportunity to photograph famous drag personalities such as Cheryl Hole, Tayce and Joe Black.

"I got to really know them so that I could plan shoots. I hired out a castle for one of my shoots and got them all dolled up because in my eyes they're kings and queens and I wanted to emulate that."

When the pandemic meant she could no longer attend drag events Lottie started experimenting with make-up and taking self-portraits in drag.

"I started to consider what it would be like to put myself into their shoes. I started with different make-up. I made myself a drag queen and a king, which is where a person decides to do more masculine make-up.

"Anyone can do drag, it doesn't matter what gender they are," she says. "It's just an expression.

"Turning the camera on myself was quite exhilarating because I'm used to directing models and being behind the camera. Putting myself in front of it in drag was so exciting and I could see why people do it. It was so much fun."



Portraits of Lottie Parry (above and below).





Cheryl Hole (centre) who appeared on RuPaul's Drag Race UK, season 1, pictured with Misty Monquie (left) and Luna Lakes (right).



Joe Black, who appeared on RuPaul's Drag Race UK, season 2.



Lilly Love

Lottie, who graduated in 2020, is currently running a fashion and clothing brand, Two Otakus, that she has set up with another Staffordshire University alumni member.

She hopes to return to photography once coronavirus restrictions have lifted and has ambitions to photograph the US drag scene and to have an exhibition in a gallery.

"The dream is to get my work into galleries. That would be an achievement in itself. I want more people to see these works of art.

"I wish I could be at the drag shows photographing them, meeting them and having a good laugh but it's not on

the cards right now. The fashion brand is a great opportunity for me to spread my wings and do something on the side as well.

"I would love to be doing the drag shows in America and meeting the US girls. That was my dream when I was at university, and I believe it still is. It's on hold, but I'd love to go on tour with them and take portraits for their Instagram accounts and for promotion. That for me would just be the dream."



ALL ABOUT DRAG

- The drag scene is far from a modern-day invention. It dates back hundreds of years, with the word 'drag' believed to have its origins in the long dresses male actors wore to depict female characters in Shakespearian times.
- Drag has experienced a renaissance thanks to the TV show RuPaul's Drag Race, fronted by RuPaul Charles.
- There is more to drag than simply a man impersonating a woman. As RuPaul says: "I don't dress like a woman; I dress like a drag queen."
- You've heard of drag queens, but did you know there are also drag kings? This involves an exaggeratedly male persona being adopted.
- Drag queen Marsha P Johnson was a key figure in protests against police raids on gay bars in New York in the late 1960s.
- One of the first drag queens to break through into the mainstream was Divine, who appeared in a number of films and played Edna Turnblad in the original version of Hairspray.
- The first series of Drag Race aired in 2009 and has become a global phenomenon.
- The first series of RuPaul's Drag Race UK aired in 2019. The judges include RuPaul, Michelle Visage, Alan Carr and Graham Norton.



Me the Drag Queen.

MORE ABOUT DRAG

- [RuPaul's UK Drag Race - www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)
- ['Finally! A sport for us gay people!': how drag went mainstream - www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)
- [The fabulous history of drag - www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)
- [Rare Shots of New York's 1990s Drag Scene - www.thecut.com](http://www.thecut.com)
- [The Drag Scene in Iceland - www.guidetoiceland.is](http://www.guidetoiceland.is)

**"I WOULD LOVE
TO BE DOING
THE DRAG
SHOWS IN
AMERICA AND
MEETING THE
US GIRLS"**



LIFE'S A DRAG

Becoming a drag queen was a liberating experience for Staffordshire University alumni Craig Worthington, who also goes by the alter ego Fleur West.

"I WANTED TO
DO SOMETHING
DIFFERENT AND
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I BOUGHT A WIG
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HEELS - THAT WAS
THE BIRTH OF
FLEUR WEST"

When Craig Worthington went for an evening out at a drag bar while living and working in South Korea he expected to enjoy a few drinks and some fun with friends. What he hadn't anticipated was a life changing encounter with a drag queen who was to become his drag mother and set him on a path of self-discovery.

"It was around November 2017, and I went to watch a drag show at a place called Lollipop," says Craig, who graduated in Drama, Performance, and Theatre Arts in 2015.

"One of the drag queens, Chaka, performed in the style of Chaka Khan and I was just so intrigued by her presence and her confidence.

"She started talking to me and asked me if I wanted to go to a barbecue. The whole time we were there she kept looking at me and saying I've got a face for drag. I didn't know if she was drunk

or being serious."

Craig, who is currently back in the UK working as a teaching assistant at a Midlands primary school, decided to dress in drag for the first time one New Year's Eve.

"I wanted to do something different and outrageous. I bought a wig and thigh-high heels - that was the birth of Fleur West."

That first experience was painful - Craig says his feet were numb the next day from wearing the shoes - but he was hooked.

"It was very liberating," he says. "I think it opened up the confidence that I didn't have before, which was very enlightening. It opened doors for me and earned me some extra money.

"At first I was overwhelmed by the compliments that I got, having people tell me how beautiful I looked. It was definitely the best decision I've ever made."

Still in South Korea, Craig was given a regular performance slot at a venue called Q Bar where he would perform alongside other drag queens including Chaka his drag mother - the name given to a drag queen who helps someone else to join the scene.

Craig says Fleur West enjoys changing her look through makeup and clothes and that she is very outrageous but also very humble.

"She likes a bit of a drink and enjoys partying with people, especially the audience. She's an audience pleaser. She thrives on compliments so if someone says she looks stunning she'll probably buy them a drink."

Fleur likes to interact with her audience and Craig describes her as a variety performer.

"I think ever since I started drag I've become more open about my homosexuality," he says. "I wasn't always comfortable with family or



friends with just being proud of my homosexuality.

"Now I'm very open and can talk about my sexuality and about drag with my parents."

Craig says he has always had the support of his family but that when he started his drag journey he didn't care whether people supported him or not.

"My dad asked me if I was getting paid for it and when I said I was he said, 'that's alright then'."

Drag is currently a hobby rather than a career for Craig. During his time in South Korea his performance fees covered the costs of outfits and makeup, but the pandemic has left Fleur West performing just once in the past 12 months.

"In South Korea there's such a small community of drag queens. Then when I came back to the UK it felt like I was just a bootleg drag queen from a little town.

"You have to work to get to the top in the drag scene, especially in the UK."

Once the pandemic is over Fleur West hopes to perform in Birmingham and Craig hasn't ruled out returning to South Korea.

He says he doesn't want to earn his living from drag, rather that he wants drag to be part of a balanced life that also includes a day job and socialising with friends.

"I want drag to be something that I enjoy and that brings more confidence out of me and that fills that little missing part of fabulousness that was not there before."

He wouldn't hesitate to recommend drag to anyone who is considering joining the scene.

"If you want to be a drag queen then it's important to build a family in the scene," he adds. "Trying to do it alone is probably going to be the biggest struggle ever."



Craig Worthington

CSI STAFFORDSHIRE

When police forces around the globe are looking for guidance on best practice it is often Staffordshire University's experts that are called on to help. Horizon magazine spoke to two academics whose work informs the professional world to find out more about Staffordshire University's growing reputation in the fields of crime, justice and security.



THE CENTRE FOR CRIME, JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Staffordshire University's Centre for Crime, Justice and Security may be new, but it is founded on the long-standing work of academics, practitioners, partners and collaborators.

"It's new in name but not new in form," says Centre Director, Professor Claire Gwinnett.

"It's housing a lot of fabulous work and is a centre to drive that work forward beyond our current expectations."

The centre currently has 104 members of internal staff

who work with different aspects of the criminal justice system and contribute towards criminal or social justice.

"We're stronger together than we are separately," she adds.

Future developments will include the creation of a forensic advice clinic where the police, individuals or even members of the public will be able to seek advice on forensic matters. It's believed the clinic will be the first of its type in the UK.

A Professor in Forensic and Environmental Science, Claire Gwinnett is also the Director of Staffordshire University's Centre for Crime, Justice and Security.

"My background is in trace evidence," she explains. "When we think about hairs, fibres from clothes, glass from windows, paint from cars, anything that can transfer into a crime scenario is what I have a special interest in.

"This goes all the way back to my PhD where I started specialising in textile fibres and trying to develop large scale databases to try to aid investigations.

"My PhD was looking at how we can do that using inexperienced personnel, so people who could be trained up in police forces or students who could gather mass data."

Claire began to specialise in competency testing, looking at quality standards within forensic science. Initially this was specifically in the field of trace evidence but has expanded out over the years.

She now works with police forces across England and Wales on their quality assurance procedures, giving advice and consultancy around things such as the validation of techniques used at crime scenes and in laboratories.

"It's really exciting," she says. "Over the last five years I've been doing a series of large-scale workshops organised centrally by Government-led Transforming Forensics.

"There are also lots of different working groups that have representation for every single police force across England and Wales. That kicked off a series of guidance and training for police forces."

Staffordshire University's Centre for Crime, Justice and Security has a

formal partnership with Staffordshire Police and has become the reviewer for much of the work the force is doing around quality standards.

"It's incredibly interesting from my point of view," says Claire. "We're sharing knowledge. They're sharing their experience and I'm sharing my experience of how you test what the best way forward is. Together we end up with recommendations. That's ultimately what they use at crime scenes from now on."



Photo courtesy of the Rozalia Project

Sampling for microplastics on the Hudson River as part of a National Geographic funded expedition.

This includes best practice around fingerprint evidence, photography at crime scenes and taking footprints as well as trace evidence.

For example, the University has developed and patented new techniques that are used at crime scenes for the recovery of fibres and other particulates that allow in-situ analysis.

The University is working in the fields of machine learning and AI on equipment such as automated microscopes that do analysis to speed up the process.

"We developed a new tape and that tape recovers particulates from crime scenes and then, without having to dissect and extract them out, we can do all the analysis inside the tape," says Claire.

Staffordshire University is working globally with police forces, forensic providers and companies that

manufacture equipment for forensic providers.

"The end goal is very fast intelligence for police forces which obviously has got many benefits including bringing the suspect into custody quicker and safeguarding individuals as fast as we possibly can," says Claire.

"It's very exciting. The world is moving forward and we're harnessing technology. Forensic science isn't sitting to one side and watching it happen.

"At the last count, we work with organisations in 22 other countries," says Claire. "The idea of that is that we identify real world problems that the criminal justice system is facing in terms of forensic fibres and trace evidence."

Claire says there have been great successes over the past six or seven years including showcasing forensic practices on a National Geographic expedition that mapped out the entire Hudson River in the US.

Claire adds: "We see our responsibility as not just to create competent individuals who are going to go out there and feed into the criminal justice system in one way or another.

"Equally our responsibility is to change the way the world is in a positive sense and to have impact.

"Anything we do within the department; we absolutely aim that it has a place in the field; that not only should it change practice for the good at a national level but that it should change it internationally.

"We should share that so that it can influence the way crime scenes are investigated in the US and further afield. That is something we're all driven by. It's testament to the University that we've always had that as a goal."

Knife crime, gun crime, sexual offences and burial environments were just some of the topics discussed at an international conference recently organised by Dr Rachel Bolton-King.

An Associate Professor of Forensic Science, Rachel specialises in firearms and ballistics, and in particular with the forensic identification of firearms and shooting incident reconstruction.

"I really link the forensic and policing side of the criminal justice system," she says. "I do a lot of work across disciplines and try to really support awareness raising, particularly within the UK, because civilians aren't necessarily familiar with firearms and ammunition."

Rachel is a National Teaching Fellow and had a fellowship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust which enabled her to travel internationally and research international best practice, which she is then able to pass on to students and practitioners.

She recently organised a national virtual conference to share her findings and best practice, which was attended by delegates from across the world.

"This was a really exciting opportunity," she says. "I wanted to

share research, particularly across policing and particularly forensics but also criminal investigations and how the evidence is collected and analysed, how that information is used within criminal justice.

"It was great that it was virtual because we were able to have some international stakeholders present as well as from across the UK."

"RACHEL RECEIVED A CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP IN 2019 AND VISITED SOUTH AFRICA, THE US AND FRANCE TO UNDERSTAND NEW WAYS TO ADDRESS GROWING GUN CRIME IN THE UK"

Rachel received a Churchill Fellowship in 2019 and visited South Africa, the US and France to understand new ways to address growing gun crime in the UK.

She says: "I was incredibly fortunate to connect with some amazing people who were very open and willing to

share their professional experiences and thoughts during my travels.

"Tackling violent, serious and organised crime globally requires holistic, overarching strategies. The type of weapon should not be the focus of our crime prevention plans and we must involve and empower the communities most affected for long term impact and sustainability."

Other Churchill Fellows who presented their research included Staffordshire University's Dr Laura Walton-Williams, who travelled to North America and Canada in 2017 to explore how early stages of sexual assault investigations can be improved. Trace fibre specialist Professor Claire Gwinnet also shared insights from her travels across the USA and Australasia in 2018.

Countries that participated in the conference included Australia, the US, Belgium, India, Guyana and the Philippines.

"It was a really nice mix of practitioners operating within the criminal justice system as well as academics and researchers," says Rachel.

"It was able to bring academia and practitioners together to help us try and identify some key themes





that are quite problematic at the moment across the criminal justice system. It was also trying to support the creation of more networks to aid that collaboration and that knowledge exchange.

"It can also help to make some of our practices more effective and more efficient by being aware of other strategies and other research that people are doing internationally that can really help take the work that we do further."

As a result of the conference a member of the Staffordshire University team was invited to co-author a book

chapter, and another was asked to be a keynote speaker at a forthcoming conference.

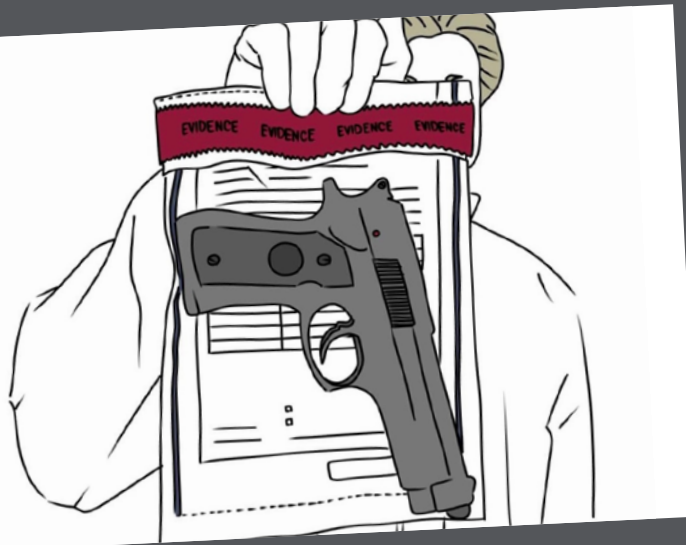
Rachel has been working with the National Ballistics Intelligence Service to help maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of firearms investigations.

The University's team has now been approached by the Caribbean to potentially provide input and advice on their training programmes.

"It's been a really great opportunity to come together," says Rachel. "And just by sheer fluke, all of the Churchill Fellows who presented at the conference were women."

"I think it's been a really good advocate for women in the field. Increasingly, even in what used to be quite male dominated forensic disciplines, women are now much higher in number."

She adds: "It doesn't matter what system you're working in across the world, we're often facing similar challenges, similar issues and we think a really collective approach is an appropriate and efficient way to be able to deliver justice to society and enhance the security of communities and civilisations across the globe."



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Did you know that there's a Staffordshire University Academies Trust made up of 20 schools? CEO Keith Hollins, an honorary doctor of Staffordshire University, tells Horizon magazine about the benefits for schools, parents and pupils alike.



Timeline

- **SEPTEMBER 2011:** The trust is established as a single academy trust and Blake Valley Technology School in Hednesford becomes Staffordshire University Academy.
- **JULY 2014:** Staffordshire University Academies Trust becomes a multi-academy trust when Moorgate Primary School converts.
- **JANUARY 2015:** The trust appoints a chief executive officer.
- **SEPTEMBER 2015:** The CEO post becomes full-time and the trust head office moves to the Beaconside campus of Staffordshire University.
- **MAY 2017:** The trust moves to its present head office in Stone, Staffordshire.
- **SEPTEMBER 2019:** SUAT is now classed as a National Trust as it is made up of between 16 and 30 academies.
- **MARCH 2020:** The trust now comprises 20 academies, has around 700 employees and an annual turnover of around £22 million.



Staffordshire University is the sponsor of a large multi-academy trust of 20 schools and around 700 staff with a combined annual turnover of £22 million.

It's been a swift growth for what is now one of the largest academy trusts in the country, after it started out in 2011 with just one school.

CEO Keith Hollins, a former executive principal of four high schools with a background of steering schools out of special measures, is clear that the arrangement is beneficial for everyone concerned.

"We support the business function of the schools because clearly schools are businesses," he says. "We also support the most important bit of it, the educational part, the delivery of the curriculum."

Each school has its own headteacher or executive headteacher plus a governing body, but can call on the resources and expertise of the trust and its executive officers.

The trust provides substantial ongoing staff training and is able to buy training and resources in bulk or at a discount, freeing up individual school budgets.

It also aims to save time for headteachers by helping to tackle complex issues such as dealing with complaints.

"The key person in any institution has to be the leader. We've got a really comprehensive programme of support in place. When someone comes in as a headteacher we allocate a mentor, who is one of our existing headteachers and is in a similar situation."

Keith explains that legally the trust and Staffordshire University are completely different entities but that they are strongly linked, including the University's Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor both serving as trustees.

"We're very lucky in being sponsored by Staffordshire University," he says. "It enables us to tap into resources that we haven't got. That could be knowledge or links between our schools and some of the schools at the University."

"We have an incredibly strong link with the sports and exercise courses. Their students coach teams in some of our schools. We're developing a link with drama and dance courses, which lends itself brilliantly to working with young people in schools.

"Visitors from the University come to our schools, including the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

"The University is very committed to the multi-academy trust, politically and academically."

Keith says that most of the schools applied to become part of the trust, and credits the link with Staffordshire University as part of the attraction.

"It's the prestige of being involved with the University," he says. "Also some of our schools are working with raising aspirations of pupils and being linked to a university is aspirational. A large number of kids won't have come from a family with massive experience of university."

He says: "Because the senior management of the University is so committed to Staffordshire University Academies Trust it just makes us very confident that when we do need support we can seek that."

For Keith, the University and the trust have a very similar vision - including a strong emphasis on levelling up.

He adds: "We are pleased and proud to be associated with the University."

So what is a multi-academies trust?

A multi-academies trust is a group of state-funded, independent schools that are run in partnership with one another and that exist outside of local authority control. The trust receives funding directly from the Department for Education and makes its own financial decisions, which means academy trust schools are run more like businesses than maintained or local authority schools. Multi-academy trusts have a CEO and a senior management team which oversees all schools within the trust.

Teacher Says

Zoe Scott, Headteacher of All Saints Church of England (A) Primary School in Bednall, Staffordshire, said: "Becoming part of the SUAT family has been the most positive thing that has happened to All Saints in a long time.

"Not only has it improved provision for children in our school, but the support provided to our staff has been immeasurable. "I started my first headship in September. This is something I would not have felt confident doing if it wasn't for the backing of SUAT.

"Knowing that you have a whole extra level of support to turn to has made the journey into headship a smooth, supportive and enjoyable one. I couldn't be prouder to be part of the SUAT team."



A COMPELLING NEW DRAMA

A masters degree in collaborative theatre practice will launch at Staffordshire University this September, with strong industry links to improve the employment prospects of graduates. Dr Robert Marsden, Associate Professor of Acting and Directing and Head of the Department for Media and Performance, explains more.



The arts is undoubtedly one of the industries hardest hit by the effects of COVID-19 and three national lockdowns so it is a bold, brave and undoubtedly brilliant move by Staffordshire University to launch a new postgraduate course in theatre arts.

The Masters in Collaborative Theatre Practice, which starts this September, will take a multidisciplinary approach and have a strong focus on the employment prospects of students upon graduation.

Dr Robert Marsden explains that the department already offers a masters course in music, is developing a masters in film for the future and is all set to launch an MA in collaborative theatre practice this September.

"There's flexibility there within the degree to collaborate on a theatre piece essentially but it doesn't mean people can't work across the department and work with other areas such as film or music," he says.

"We're very much taking a real world authentic approach but there's lots of flexibility in there. What our students will come out with is that they will have created a theatre company, that's the end goal.

"It's so that people can springboard and launch themselves, not only as an artist but also as a company. What that company is and how they negotiate what that might look like and how they work is completely up to the student or groups of students."

He says the first cohort of 8 to 12 students might have come from a generic drama background, an acting background, a design background, a directing background or perhaps an English or Film degree background.

"So you've got all these people rubbing shoulders at the start of the course and one of the things they've got to decide is what kind of work do they want to make and how do they pool their resources to make it?

"We can't pre-describe post-pandemic what the creative arts is going to look like. It's in flux, it's changing. We can't say it will be like this. We want the students to say 'this is the type of work we want to make'. We also want them to think about how they want to make work."

Robert wants the masters students to be influencing the industry and changing how the industry works - leading the way and saying how they want to work.

He accepts that it's a bold move to be launching a new postgraduate course when creative arts has been so damaged by the pandemic, but says it was deliberately timed to be so.

"It's deliberately there to counter some of the negativity around it, to tell people that they're in control and to take ownership."

The course will include help with setting up as a theatre company such as legal and company structure support.

Why choose Staffordshire University for postgraduate study?

- **Staffordshire University was rated gold for teaching excellence by the Teaching Excellence Framework.**
- **Staffordshire University was shortlisted for University of the Year in the Times Higher Awards 2020.**
- **Staffordshire University was in the top 15 for social inclusion in The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021.**

"It's really important that students are equipped to make a living within their art form," says Robert. "This is absolutely trying to equip people with the skills and knowledge, technologies and understanding to be able to work within a company structure on graduation."

There will be industry mentors to help guide the individuals, who will be matched and tailored towards the goals of individual students.

"If someone comes in and says they want to make theatre for children then we would find a children's theatre industry mentor to support that group of students. It will all be very bespoke.

"We're a Civic University so we like to start locally with mentors. Once we know what the makeup of the student cohort is we'll then start to approach people and begin locally.

“That’s not to say we won’t reach out nationally and internationally. The pandemic has changed a lot of people’s working practices.

You can have a mentor who is on the other side of the world if it works for those students. It’s now part and parcel of how we work.”

He adds: “We’re using this degree as a prototype to refresh the MA in music, which again will have an employability and entrepreneurial route through it, and to

launch a new masters in filmmaking, again so that they can create companies and create work. We’ll give them the structure to do so.

“We’re on a really exciting journey in this department with multidisciplinary, cross disciplinary and interdisciplinary working to really skill students on all courses to make them resilient, to make them think that they can work across different mediums and collaborate with different artists and makers.”

Virtual postgraduate open event

The next virtual postgraduate open event is on Wednesday, August 4, from 4pm to 6pm and is the perfect opportunity to find out everything you need to know about studying with Staffordshire University and what it’s like to be a postgraduate student.

There will be an opportunity to chat online to brilliant and friendly academics to discuss the course you’re interested in or to get one-to-one advice and guidance from expert student support, finance, careers and personal development teams.

You can chat online to current postgraduate students to discover more about student life and why Staffordshire University is the place to be for postgraduate study.

There will also be an opportunity to find out more about the application process for postgraduate courses and to learn more about on-campus facilities including the

library, nursery and careers studio. You can also explore the state-of-the-art facilities on a virtual tour.

The event will be split into six virtual booths. Within these booths you’ll have the opportunity to chat online to academics, support services and postgraduate student ambassadors. As well as online chat facilities these booths also hold lots of information to help you find out more about what Staffordshire University has to offer. There will be videos, PDFs for download, links to the website and virtual tours to make sure all the information you would want is just a click away.

During the event the University will also be broadcasting several talks that focus on the most popular questions asked by prospective postgraduate students. These live presentations will be available on demand after the live broadcast.

MSc in Human Factors for Patient Safety

The first MSc in Human Factors for Patient Safety was launched at Staffordshire University in September 2020. The postgraduate course developed from the University’s aim to embed patient safety uppermost in all its nursing and allied health courses.

The new PgCert Human Factors for Patient Safety - part of the MSc - has been approved by the Chartered Institute of Ergonomic and Human Factors as an accredited short course. It aims to educate those working in health and social care settings to support the design and redesign of systems and equipment to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of patients. Newly appointed as Senior Lecturer on the course is Professor Paul Bowie, a safety scientist and Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors, who has worked in the NHS in Scotland for more than 25 years and has published extensively on healthcare quality and safety.

He says: “Building leadership capacity and capability

in patient safety and human factors sciences is vital for the safe functioning of the NHS and healthcare systems internationally.

“The patient safety team at Staffordshire University is leading the way in the provision of innovative education and undertaking pioneering research in these fields.” Acting Dean in the School of Health and Social Care, Mike Phillips, says: “For several years now, we have been hammering home the importance of patient safety and we believe we have the specialist team to deliver a dynamic learning experience to students across our courses.

This builds on the existing excellent work that our academics have been doing over the past few years in our efforts to develop the very safest of graduates for health and social care professions.

“We’re confident this has helped prepare our students for work on the frontline as they have taken on paid volunteering roles with the NHS during the pandemic.”

3

VOICES

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY IS INCREDIBLY PROUD OF ITS ALUMNI.

HERE, THREE GRADUATES, FROM A VARIETY OF SECTORS, TALK ABOUT LIFE POST-UNIVERSITY.



1 / JOANNE



Joanne Hannaford is a partner and Head of Engineering in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, at investment bank Goldman Sachs. Joanne graduated from Staffordshire University with a 1st in Computer Science in 1992, when Staffordshire was the only UK university that would allow HND students to bridge to a degree course. She recently became a Governor here and is a board member for the UK Government Digital Service Advisory Board and the Women in Science and Engineering organisation. Joanne and Goldman Sachs recently announced they are opening an engineering hub in Birmingham, which she hopes will provide internship and graduate opportunities for Staffordshire University students.

What drives you every day?

I am someone who thrives on change, being an engineer teaches you that nothing stays the same, which for me is really exciting. Mostly recently, driving the opening of our new UK office in Birmingham. We have plans to grow to a couple of hundred people over the next few years so it's exciting to think of the difference this could make for the region.

What does success mean to you?

To me success is about being in a position where I can influence the outcome of ideas and give back to the community. One of the things I've realised about engineering is you can still do your day job and help significant numbers of people too. Goldman Sachs are passionate about driving quality STEM education across the UK, and inspiring graduates into engineering careers.

What do you do to relax?

I started watching Line of Duty recently and now I can't stop. I've always loved coming home after work, getting comfy and watching a good TV programme. I also walk my dogs and play tennis.

What's your career highlight?

I like seeing the long-term impact of things that I have worked on, whether that's designing a platform still being used years later, or the amount of people that I've seen develop through their careers. To me that's what success looks like - it's the positive influence you can have. Opening our Birmingham office is just another example of that.

Who inspires you?

Many people inspire me. I'm constantly inspired by day-to-day stories of people being kind and doing selfless things. I lost my mother last year to COVID-19. She had always been a big influence on me, and yet most women don't often talk about their mothers. My mother was of that war generation who just got on with things; over the last year, I think that quality has really shone through in people.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

I also lost my dad when I was young which made me grow up very quickly, I was quite mature for an 18-year-old. When I look back and think of all the hardships I overcame, I don't know how I did it. So, I would say well done!

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

Don't give up! When I was applying for my first internship, I went to the Staffordshire University library and found a book of company addresses, I must have written a thousand application letters. Eventually I was offered an internship at the investment bank Merrill Lynch which launched my career. You only need one positive response. I would also say be optimistic, try things, and if you're lucky, you'll find what makes you happy.

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

I am definitely wiser, but that comes with experience. I know what my values are now and I'm consistent about being myself. I feel lucky to work at Goldman Sachs because I've found a company whose core values really match my own.

2 / TANAKA

Since graduating with a BA in Business Management in 2014 Tanaka Adeyemo has worked as a project officer with Teach First and launched her own business, Rudorwaishe Ltd, selling educational African language flashcards. Tanaka is also working alongside two other women on a charity to fund a self-sustaining orphanage that would house up to 100 children impacted by the AIDS pandemic in Gweru, Zimbabwe. Their goal is to provide a stable home and give the children a better chance at a brighter future through education.

What drives you every day?

My little girl is the one thing that drives me more than anything else. Rudorwaishe is named after her and really came to life when she was born. Since then I've been non-stop, doing all I can to make sure I make her and myself proud.

What does success mean to you?

Success to me means having the ability to help others be the best version of themselves without worrying about providing for my own family.

What do you do to relax?

I love to unwind in front of the TV with a glass of wine. That paired with a day to pamper myself is my ultimate way to relax. Nothing beats a facial, mani-pedi, glass of wine and a good series to binge watch.

What's your career highlight?

Finishing my project management certifications and getting promoted within months in my job during a very difficult personal time and all whilst managing my business on my own.

Who inspires you?

My sister really inspires me. She has worked so hard and followed her dreams and as a result she has managed to land her dream job working with very inspiring people within the film industry. It wasn't an easy journey for her at all but she did it and I'm beyond proud of her.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

One thing I have always struggled with is self-doubt. I would tell my 18-year-old self to feel the fear and do it anyway. I would tell myself that self-development is key. Get to know yourself on a deeper level and understand why you operate and think the way that you do. Knowing that will give you more confidence than you can ever imagine. Go to those therapy sessions and listen to those audio books your sister told you to. That's what I would tell my younger self for sure.

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

The biggest secret that was revealed to me is that no one really knows what they are doing at the start. Successful people simply feel the fear and do it anyway and are not afraid to fail because through it they learn a lot. My advice is to just get started on that idea, just go to that networking event, just send your application in for those jobs, just be open to new things!

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

Self-love and self-cognition is extremely important. You have to be kind to yourself and get to know yourself really well. Once you leave university, it can be a challenging and confusing time but you have to remember to go easy on yourself.



3 / ANDREW



It was during his environmental science degree at Staffordshire University that three times Olympic gold medallist Andrew Triggs Hodge MBE first took up rowing. After graduating in 2000 he won his first international vest for Great Britain in 2002. He won gold medals at the Beijing, London and Rio Olympics. Now both an Honorary Doctor and Pro-Chancellor of Staffordshire University, Andrew works as Director of Corporate Engagement at the charity London Youth Rowing. Rather than hunting for Olympic rowers of the future, his aim is to improve the life chances of underprivileged young people by introducing them to rowing.

What drives you every day?

I'm driven by making a difference. I want to use the sport I love to help as many people as possible.

What does success mean to you?

Success, to me, is working with great people and being part of a great team. Within my current work context it's about helping to reach out to young people and give them positive life chances for the future.

What do you do to relax?

I sleep! I've got three young boys so I'm either working and being highly motivated by that or I'm busy being dad. I think I probably don't do enough relaxing at the moment.

What's your career highlight?

Winning my three Olympic gold medals gave me some pretty big moments. Being able to celebrate with your crew once you're across the finishing line is amazing, then of course being on the podium is a real high. A memorable moment for me was getting back to the hotel room after winning. It's the same environment that you've been in and out of for the past few weeks, but this time you've got your gold medal back there with you for the first time. That feels quite extraordinary. From then on there are lots of little kicks, like having your gold medal in your bag when you walk through town. Nobody knows it's there, but you.

Who inspires you?

I'm inspired by people I can connect with rather than famous heroes that I can't connect with. My parents have always been huge role models for me because of their work ethic and the standards they've set in life. During my time at Staffordshire University I was inspired by fellow students who encouraged me to get involved with rowing and helped me to feel comfortable with not necessarily fitting in. Then there are people like Pete Reed, my pairs partner, who has been such an enduring inspiration.

What would you tell your 18-year-old self?

I'd have said 'have confidence in yourself and follow your passions'.

What advice would you give to a new graduate?

Have a thirst for opportunity. If you're given an opportunity to do something then take it. If you haven't found your passion in life yet, don't stop looking for it because it will be there. If you don't follow paths then you don't know what you'll find at the end of them. Don't restrict yourself and don't turn things down.

What's the biggest lesson you've learnt since leaving University?

I've learnt the value of teams and the value of partnerships. When you're at university you spend so much time thinking about your own personal grades but as soon as you leave the best thing about life is teamwork. University can't really prepare you for that transition into teamwork and becoming accountable to a team.

BOOST YOUR CAREER WITH A POSTGRADUATE DEGREE



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**TO REALISE
MY POTENTIAL**

#TIMEFORPOSTGRAD

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Allied Health
Animation
Art and Design
Biological, Biomedical and
Healthcare Science
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Computer Science

Drama, Performance and Theatre Studies
Music
Nursing and Midwifery
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Psychology and Counselling
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*Terms and conditions apply



STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

NEWS

MEET OUR PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR EDUCATION



In May 2021, Dr Annabel Kiernan took up the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education to develop and deliver teaching and learning across our Connected University.

Dr Kiernan joined Staffordshire University from Nottingham Trent University. She said: "In my new role I will focus on leading the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of the academic student experience at Staffordshire University, specifically aligning it to the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

"I will be working with colleagues across all Schools to develop and support the working practices of staff and further embed a culture of focused excellence in curriculum design, and teaching and assessment practice.

"I will be working with colleagues across the University to support the achievement of the institution's aspiration to be the UK's digitally leading university, enabling cutting edge practice in digital learning, teaching and assessment."

HORIZON FUND



More than 200 students have received a helping hand with their studies after qualifying for bursaries and scholarships totalling £240,000.

The Horizon Fund was set up to help students make the most of their study experience and prepare them for careers of the future. And thanks to the generosity of donors, including The Denise Coates Foundation, the fund is supporting more students than ever before.

The Denise Coates Foundation, now in its 7th year, continues to support local high-achieving students from low-income families.

Fashion degree student, Alice Lucas is excited by her fast-paced course and has had her passion ignited by seeing parts of the industry she had never considered before.

She said: "I have been able to support my studies by buying fashion books, a mannequin, a printer, and many other useful materials, all thanks to the generosity of the Denise Coates Foundation Bursary. I can't wait to continue my studies and see where my creativity takes me."

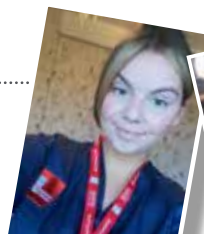
Aspiring teacher Misbah Mahmood, 20, says the bursary has helped her to enrol onto a British Sign Language course.

Aspiring cinematographer Rowan Walker, 20, says his bursary has helped fund his filmmaking and made him more ambitious - also helping with this final year project.

For other recipients of the Horizon Fund, the financial support is helping them manage study, work and family commitments.

Ricky Price, 34, from Bentilee, is training to become a paramedic so that he can help others and make his children proud.

He said: "The fund has helped me massively to balance study and to spend time with my children. It has taken the pressure off and I can't thank the donors enough for that as nothing is more important than time with my kids."



STAFFS ALUMNI CONNECTED COMMUNITY

The Staffs Alumni Connected Community brings our whole community together by providing you with access to the following:

- A running feed of alumni updates, interesting content, photos, videos and conversations.
- A platform to find and reminisce with your classmates and stay in touch.
- A job board showing current opportunities, posted by alumni, students and strategic partners.
- A mentorship programme, giving you the opportunity to be mentored by others, OR offer mentorship to fellow alumni/final year students.
- Group conversations and discussions allowing you to engage more specifically with those from the same class, interests, careers, industries or similar geographical locations as you.
- Event invites posted by alumni, students and Staffordshire University. These may include webinars hosted by subject matter experts within our networks, public lectures, coffee meetings around the world, virtual events or training opportunities, as well as reunions or other celebrations. In addition, any other organic engagement opportunities created for or by you.

You can sign up NOW in less than a couple of minutes with LinkedIn or Facebook, or you can register with your email.

This global platform is designed with you in mind!

Join the community and stay connected.
www.staffsalumni.com

RESEARCHING BEST PRACTICE ON AND OFF THE PITCH

A new project is aiming to break the last taboos in women's football from periods to pregnancy.

Staffordshire University has been calling on women's football clubs across the UK to identify best practices in the sport which can be shared across Europe.

Dr Jacky Forsyth, Associate Professor of Exercise Physiology, explained: "We know that there are huge gender inequalities in sport, but we want to focus on the positives and highlight what is actually being done well. Women's football has made great progress in recent years and by sharing best practice from grass roots to elite level we can help to continue that momentum."

This latest research is part of the European Women in Sport (E-WinS) project which is funded by the Erasmus+ Sport programme and brings together experts from nine universities and sports organisations.

Staffordshire University has kicked off the three-year venture by gathering information from football players themselves and also coaches, leaders, managers and governors.

The research will address issues specific to women in sport including the impact of menstruation and hormone-based contraception on performance.

She said: "We spend so much time talking about the science of sport and what we can do to improve performance, but relatively little time talking about the menstrual cycle, which can have important physiological, biomechanical, nutritional as well as psychological consequences. Some good practices have already been identified. For instance, players track their menstrual cycle using an app, such as the Fitwoman app, and training is adapted to their individual needs.

"Some football clubs hire nannies to look after the players' children during training and travel, and they also receive a specific training programme to help them get back in shape after pregnancy.

"Pay, sponsorship and media coverage are current and relevant topics that we are also exploring."

UK women's football clubs are invited to contact Dr Jacky Forsyth on J.J.Forsyth@staffs.ac.uk for further information about the project.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



STAFFORDSHIRE GRADUATES NAMED IN QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Two recent Staffordshire University graduates have been recognised in Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday Honours list.



Aida Haughton MBE

The published list recognises the achievements and service of extraordinary people across the United Kingdom, including Aida Haughton and Corinne Boden who have both been awarded MBEs.

Aida, who works as a housing support administrator with YMCA North Staffordshire, has been awarded an MBE for services to Remembering Srebrenica.

As a survivor of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 47-year-old has been determined to ensure people never forget the genocide committed in 1995, where thousands of predominantly Muslim men and boys were murdered and buried in mass graves.

Her work has led to a memorial garden being created at the YMCA in memory of the victims, along with several commemorative events in the Potteries.

Aida completed a degree in BA (Hons) Modern and International History this year with her dissertation exploring the experiences of translators in the Bosnian War, having worked as a translator throughout the event herself.

During her studies, she also arranged for young people from North Staffordshire and members of the University community to visit Bosnia and get involved in projects which challenge hatred and prejudice.

Aida said: "One does not do charity work for a reward, but to do good, so getting an MBE for the work that helps both individuals and communities was a very humbling and a proud moment, not just for myself and my family, but for the Remembering Srebrenica and the YMCA North Staffordshire charities without whose support my work would not have the impact we see today.

"Though many people do not realise, hate speech and classification to 'us' and 'them' represent one of 10 steps of genocide, so as a Bosnian war survivor I use my experiences in raising awareness on harms of hate and discrimination. The army of volunteers, individuals and community groups I have met over the years taught me so much and I feel privileged that together we continue to do good, no matter how big or small."

Corrine Boden graduated with a degree in BA (Hons) Social Welfare Law, Policy and Advice Practice last year and has been awarded an MBE for services to the community.

Corrine has led Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank, turning it into one of the top 20 foodbanks across the whole of the Trussell Trust's 1,250-strong network. During the coronavirus crisis, record numbers of families have turned to the organisation for support.

She is described as 'an exceptional person who is passionate in her desire to help all those in need'. Corinne has also helped to coordinate a citywide response with the local authority and voluntary sector during the pandemic, delivering essential food.

Commenting on the Queen's Birthday Honours, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Liz Barnes CBE DL said: "We are so proud to see Aida and Corrine recognised for the positive impact that they are making in the local community and beyond. The fact that they are both recent Staffordshire University graduates is testimony to the role higher education plays in helping to make the world a better place. We wish to add our heartfelt congratulations on the awarding of these honours which are richly deserved."

Holding out for our heroes **UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES ITS HONOURS LIST**

Inspirational leaders including company bosses, a chief nurse, former MP and international peacekeeper are among those to be recognised.

The latest line-up includes retired Cheshire digital technology entrepreneur **Robert Barrow MBE DL**, **Darren Birt**, Director of Crewe-based FHL, and **Paul Farmer OBE**, Managing Director of Wade Ceramics, who are all recognised for their significant contributions to business development and the economies of Staffordshire and Cheshire.

International Relations graduate **Nihad Alihodzic** will also become an Honorary Doctor of the University in recognition of his commitment to making the world a safer place through his work to eliminate chemical weapons in countries including

Iraq, Libya and Syria.

And closer to home **Professor Mark Radford**, Health Education England Chief Nurse and Deputy Chief Nurse for England, is being recognised for his role as an inspirational leader. He is currently leading on the workforce and training workstream of the Covid-19 NHS vaccination delivery programme.

Also recognised with the award of Honorary Doctor of the University are former Stafford MP **Jeremy Lefroy** and former Chair of the University's Board of Governors **David Gage MBE DL**. They are recognised for their services and unstinting support to the county and to the University.

Staffordshire University Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Liz Barnes CBE DL said: "When normal service resumes, they will get to don their cap and gown, celebrate their achievements and share their wisdom with our graduating students. As a Connected University community, we can't wait for that to happen!"

Professor Mark Radford



ROLL CALL OF HONOURS

Graduates, honorary graduates and former staff members were recognised in Her Majesty The Queen's New Year Honours list.

The published list recognises the achievements and service of extraordinary people across the United Kingdom.

Recipients include Stoke-on-Trent filmmaker Darren Teale, who founded his company Junction 15 after graduating with a BA (Hons) Film, TV and Radio from Staffordshire University in 2005.

BSc (Hons) Forensic Science and Criminology graduate Courtney-Jayne Foley from Malpas in Cheshire also received an MBE for her services to Defence during the COVID-19 Response. Graduated in 2011, Courtney-Jayne works as a Maritime Electronic Warfare Systems Programme Manager for the Ministry of Defence but headed up a team

responsible for procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) for use across the NHS.

Meanwhile, the UK's first Asian blind barrister, Fayyaz Afzal – who graduated from the University with a Law degree in 1998 and a Postgraduate Diploma in commercial Law in 2000 – has received a CBE for services to the Judiciary and to Diversity and Inclusion. Now a Judge overseeing some of the most serious family cases in the legal system, he was made an Honorary Doctor of the University in 2010.

Also recognised for her services to the legal profession is honorary graduate Cordella Bart-Stewart OBE who graduated with an LLB from North Staffordshire Polytechnic – now Staffordshire University – in 1980 and who also founded the Black Solicitors Network.

Former senior lecturer Lee Pardy-McLaughlin was also awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List for his services to social work.



Fayyaz Afzal CBE

Professor Michael Wood OBE, who has an honorary degree from Staffordshire University and also served as Pro Chancellor, has also been recognised for services to Public History and to Broadcasting.

We're always proud of our graduates' ambition, excellence and creativity, but after a particularly difficult year, we're especially proud of their incredible focus, tenacity, resilience and commitment to succeed despite the challenges and disruption they've faced. The diversity of their creative approaches to art and design work is impressive.

ART AND DESIGN SHOWCASE 2021

BA (Hons) Graphic Design graduate **James Gibson** who has Cystic Fibrosis was shielding for much of the pandemic before returning to University to be part of the exhibition. He said: "Honestly it's been quite emotional, especially when we came in and started painting the studio. It marks the culmination of what has been a very difficult 12 months I think for everybody."

James designed a typeface inspired by his condition. "It's been my life goal to raise awareness of Cystic Fibrosis, what it does and how it can affect people daily. It is a hidden disability where the walls of the lungs become clogged with mucus so for my 'Fibrosis Sans' typeface I used strands for each of the letter forms representing what is going on inside the chest out of view."

BA (Hons) Photography graduate **Vicki Guildford** decided to capture the emotional impact of COVID-19 and isolation on children in her village through a series of photos. Armed with a trolley of camera equipment, all photographs were taken within walking distance of Vicki's home and many subjects were photographed through front doors or windows due to social distancing.

The 39-year-old said: "The project looks into the face of confinement and the effects it had on a cross section of children aged between 5 and 11."

Other projects on display included ideas for new products from Industrial Design: Product & Transport including graduate **Liam Dawson** who has created a wearable device that monitors air quality.

'Aura' uses an inbuilt sensor to measure air quality, recording the data in an accompanying app, and is magnetic so that it can easily be worn in multiple ways including as a necklace, badge, or keyring.

Liam added: "Before a drop in levels during the pandemic, The World Health Organisation labelled air pollution as the single biggest environmental threat to human health, so I definitely think it's a big issue that a lot of people should be concerned about."



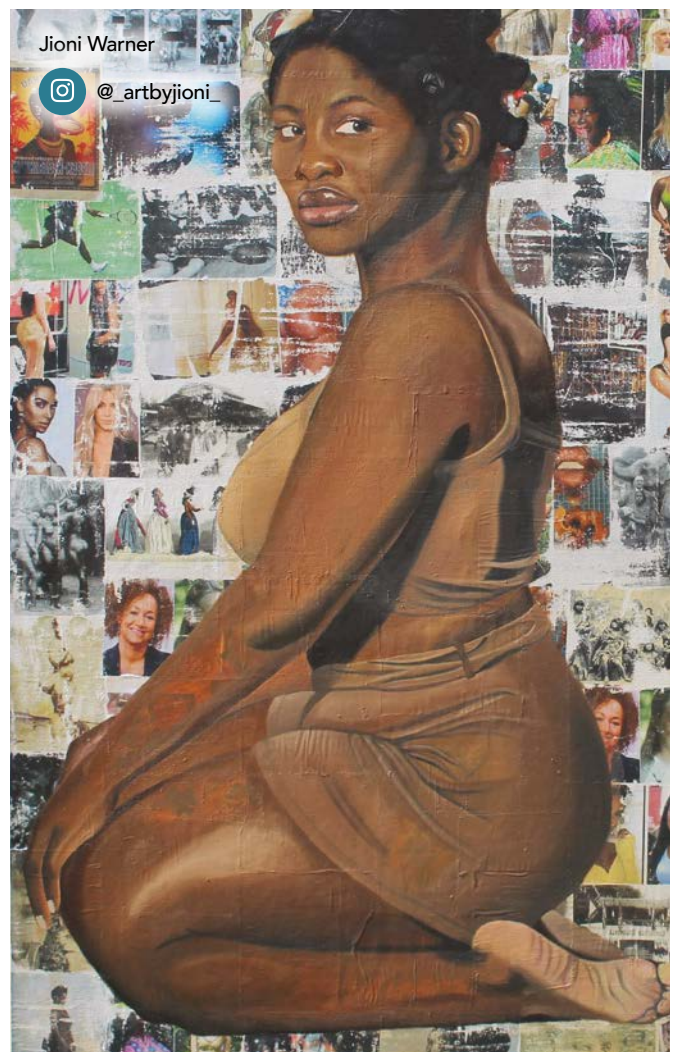
'Fibrosis Sans' - James Gibson

@type_o_graphic_designer



'Lockdown Children' - Vicki Guildford

@victoriaannphotographystaffs



Jioni Warner

@_artbyjioni_




'Aura' - Liam Dawson

liamdawson2



'Sinking Bride' - El Gabriel Brown

 @el-gabriel_photography



Ashwin Modhwadia

 @ashwinwork

The Cynic



Discover more student projects featured in the show on **Staffordshire University's YouTube Channel.**

Autumn Brown

 @abe0art

CATALYST FOR A CAREER IN CONSTRUCTION

Class of 2020 graduates completed a month-long internship with construction giants VINCI Construction UK on The Catalyst project at the University.

The placement programme enabled graduates to explore all aspects of the construction industry over four weeks. Its weekly rotations included working alongside the site management and engineering teams, commercial, project management and design teams.

Dylan Foster graduated with a BA (Hons) in Business with Marketing Management and is currently

undertaking an MBA at Staffordshire University. He said: "I knew that I wanted to be proactive during lockdown to gain new skills and work experience. When the opportunity to work on The Catalyst project came along, I jumped at the chance."

"The VINCI team was really welcoming and from day one we were shown how diverse your skills have to be working in the construction sector. It's amazing to be able to say so early on in my career that I've worked on a project like this"

George Lewis, a BA (Hons) Graphic Design graduate, added: "I hadn't



Graduates James Dempster and Will Mclauchlan now working on the Catalyst.

planned on going into construction specifically, but it has been a great experience and I know that even if I don't pursue this as a career, that there is still so much that I've learned that I can take into different jobs in the future."

The partnership was initiated as part of a social value pledge between Staffordshire University and VINCI Construction UK. The £40 million Catalyst building is due for completion in autumn 2021 and will feature innovative teaching and learning spaces, a dedicated flexible events space and new catering provisions.

Filmmakers from Staffordshire University are celebrating after winning half the prizes at the Royal Television Society's Midlands Student Awards

Winners were announced in a virtual ceremony and Staffordshire University scooped four out of the eight awards on offer – more than any other institution.

Recent graduates Georgia Taylor and Thomas Read both did the double and took home two awards each.

Georgia, who studied Media (Film) Production, was praised for her film *Callie* which won in the 'Scripted' and 'Craft Skills - Writing' categories. It is the second year running that Georgia has excelled in the competition after earning two awards for her film *One-Eighty* last year.

The 22-year-old said: "To win two years running is unbelievable to me! Just to be nominated for a second year was amazing but to win - wow! I really am over the moon."

After graduating last summer, Georgia now works at a production company in Manchester. She said: "I love coming to work every day. I definitely think my course equipped me really well to enter the industry with confidence and skills in multiple areas which I've definitely found I need in my role."

Fellow winner Thomas, who studied Digital Film and

"TO WIN TWO YEARS RUNNING IS UNBELIEVABLE TO ME!"

Post Production, triumphed in the 'Non Scripted' category for his film *Living Off Grid*, which takes a look at life inside Pembrokeshire eco community Brithdir Mawr. Comedian and guest judge Lenny Henry described it as "a really beautiful, effectual documentary-style film".

Thomas was also recognised alongside course mates Natalie Argent and Tom Connor in the 'Craft Skills – Camera' category for a music video made for Brixton-based rapper and singer Bushrod's single *Lowkey*.

Colin Mottram, Senior Lecturer in Film Production, added: "We're really proud of the students' success at the 2021 RTS Midlands award. Collecting four awards from the eight categories is an incredible

achievement and testament to the resilience, adaptability, hard work and creativity the students have shown in a year like no other.

"Winning awards across such a range of categories highlights the rounded approach students take to their studies on the Film and Media courses here at Staffordshire University."



RTS winner *Callie*.

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#theHorizonPodcast



HORIZON

Staffordshire University
2021/22 ISSUE
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