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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

International
Impact

Vice-Chancellor's *view*



Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood

YOUR BUZZ

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Front cover image: Professor Hisham Mehanna and David Evans from the Institute for Global Innovation (IGI).

As I write this article, *The Sunday Times* has suggested that the University of Birmingham is 'among the elite institutions topping Britain's rankings of extremist speakers at universities'. If true, this would be a cause for concern. The article is, in fact, a cause for concern for quite different reasons.

The article went on to suggest that in 2017–18 the University of Birmingham had hosted some ten 'firebrands' at meetings on campus. The source for this was the Henry Jackson Society. So far as we can judge and certainly in the case of Birmingham, the research appears to be based on looking at the Facebook page of the University's Islamic Society.

The so-called 'extremists' or 'firebrands' included someone who had been awarded an OBE for their work to promote good community relations and no-one on the list was on the government's register of proscribed (banned) speakers. Moreover, nobody on the list was flagged by the police as someone who would give them concern. We know this, because we have protocols governing all events on campus – including reviewing any invited external speakers.

So the concern becomes something quite different. It is, in fact, a concern about those who would wish to police free speech on our campuses. If universities are places of freedom of speech, they will be places where diverse views are expressed and debated. They will be places where all of us are invited to consider views which are different from our own. They will be places where new ideas are forged from contesting old ideas.

For some, however, this notion that universities are places of free speech and free exploration is rejected out of hand. These, it seems to me, are people who would want to dismiss views that they happen to disagree with unheard. Indeed, they might wish to silence people whose views they do not know.

What is profoundly concerning about this attack on free speech in universities is the chilling effect this might have.

Despite the fact that this article and the associated 'league table' was dealing

with speakers who had been legitimately invited to the University to talk to a University society, to participate in an academic debate, to act as a case study for Medical Students or to be part of a panel, and were, by the government's own definition, perfectly free to express their views within the law, nevertheless one MP described this as 'incredibly distressing', he urged an immediate inquiry.

Why there should be an immediate inquiry into universities and university societies legitimately going about their business after following university processes is as troubling as it is perplexing.

If this were not concerning enough, before Christmas I received a letter complaining about one of our academic colleagues. This academic colleague, a specialist, had been on a national news programme offering a commentary on Brexit. This correspondent disagreed with the views of our colleague. He is, of course, perfectly at liberty to do so. What was not acceptable was his insistence that I should investigate the colleague in question and prevent them from expressing their views in the media. He demanded that I reply to his letter.

I did indeed reply. I made it clear that my legal duty was to uphold freedom of expression within the University and the academic freedom of my colleagues. It was not part of my role to express views on my colleague's views, and indeed I would strongly defend all of my colleagues' rights to express their views irrespective of whether I happened to agree with them.

There, the correspondence stopped. What has not stopped, however, is this constant and incoherent attack on universities. We are simultaneously being attacked for silencing free speech, indulging a 'snowflake' generation, no-platforming speakers, and hosting extremists.

There is, of course, no coherence in any of this. What there is, however, is a growing disquiet with the process of debate and exploration. There is a desire, often fuelled in the safe spaces of social media, to close down enquiry and to close ears to different and challenging perspectives. If universities capitulate to

BIRMINGHAM GLOBAL

UNITED STATES

US UNIVERSITY LEADERS VIEW BIRMINGHAM RESEARCH LINKS AT FIRST HAND

The University of Birmingham welcomed a high-profile delegation of senior leaders from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to mark the success of the BRIDGE programme.



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these pressures, not only will our university communities be diminished, our national life will be impoverished.

We therefore all have a responsibility to rally to the defence of universities as places of free speech. We recognise that those freedoms exist within the law and indeed are protected by the law. We frame our debates in ways which are respectful of difference, curious about diversity, and willing to evidence and not merely assert positions. As our country becomes more polarized and more intolerant of difference, our universities must be places where diversity is embraced and pluralism is celebrated. **Therein lies a richer, more tolerant, and more resilient future for us all.**

*Vice-Chancellor,
Professor Sir David Eastwood*

A strategic partnership supporting transatlantic collaboration in multiple research areas from the humanities to engineering sciences, BRIDGE fellowships have enabled the two universities to jointly recruit high-potential researchers at the start of their academic careers.

Led by Chancellor Robert Jones, the US delegation met Birmingham experts and discussed how the partnership might grow, particularly in areas such as Water Sciences, Health Data Research and Medical Technologies.

University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood welcomed the delegation and commented: *'The partnership between Birmingham and Urbana-Champaign represents all that is best in two great universities working together. It is built on more than 60 research collaborations between faculty colleagues.*

'We are able to innovate within this partnership and perhaps the best example of innovation is the BRIDGE Fellowships – giving a unique opportunity to early career academics to build international networks that will allow their careers to flourish.'

The three-year Fellowship programme began in September 2016 and contributes to the research and academic excellence of both institutions in five key areas:

- Aging and Cognition

Professor Tim Softley, University of Birmingham Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer said:

'In establishing the unique BRIDGE Fellowships, we are developing research collaborations that will both produce outstanding results and help to address the global challenges of our time.'

- Brain Trauma
- Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Economic Development
- Diversity, Race and Education
- Population Dynamics

Fellows spend first and third years at Birmingham with the middle year at Illinois, conducting high-quality research before assuming an academic lecturer post at Birmingham.

The visitors met BRIDGE fellows and other Birmingham researchers collaborating with Illinois, and discovered more about their research programmes, including nanoparticles, cultural heritage and biofuels.

The two universities signed a strategic agreement, known as the BRIDGE (BiRmingham-Illinois Partnership for Discovery, EnGagement and Education) Alliance, in March 2014. This built on a four-year partnership and the agreement was renewed for a further five years in April 2018.

Chancellor Robert Jones said:

'The BRIDGE Fellowship Program is an exceptional example of how two institutions can work together to provide the transformative learning experiences that are essential in higher education.'

Building our online reputation

With 9 million users a year visiting the University's website, this is our shop window onto the world and is a critical channel for communicating our research strengths. Professor Tim Softley chaired a cross-University group in 2018 to improve the research section of the main website to ensure that information could be found more easily and our areas of strength and strategic priorities were more clearly highlighted to funders and stakeholders.

This work is part of a wider piece of work to build and enhance the University's research reputation. Other elements include: Quest (the new international campaign and research magazine); social media training and support for academics; support for highly cited researchers to build their online

profile; a new Influential Researcher toolkit, and our well-established Heroes campaigns.

The new web pages (www.birmingham.ac.uk/research) launched on 29 November and brought together:

- A section which brings together Institutes and Centres in one place
- New Spotlight pages to highlight research themes or areas of activity where Birmingham demonstrates leadership, or has the potential to
- More space on the page to showcase the latest research news and stories
- Clearer signposting for PhDs (major users of the website) on secondary navigation
- Research events highlighted on the landing page

The research web pages review project

will undergo continuous improvement through to summer 2019 and will include more user testing, local templates, integration with PURE and pinning high-profile publications at the top of the list, plus exploring options to replace the existing search site for the whole website.

Dates for the diary

Vice-Chancellor's Open Forum

Friday 15 February,
12.30–1.30pm, The Bramall

The Vice-Chancellor will be interviewed by Debbie McVitty (Wonkhe) on key issues facing the higher education sector and the University.

Birmingham Professional Forum

Tuesday 5 March,
11.00am–12noon, The Bramall

All staff are warmly invited to the forum, which is introduced by the Registrar and Secretary, Lee Sanders. The agenda will follow closer to the event.



The Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series

Professor Martin Bridson

Edgbaston Park Hotel, Fry Room
Tuesday 26 February 2019
6.00–7.00pm

As part of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture series, the University is delighted to welcome renowned mathematician, Professor Martin Bridson to deliver a keynote talk entitled 'Pure Mathematics: what is the point?'

Mankind cannot abide not knowing, so we do mathematics. But what do mathematicians do all day and what is 'Pure Mathematics'?

Is it the recreational pursuit of tautological truth and obscure beauty, or does the future of our species depend on an expansion of our mathematical knowledge?

When we contact intelligent aliens, will their mathematics be the same as ours?

Professor Bridson will address these questions as he describes the life of a pure mathematician. Along the way, he will discuss

codes, flat earths, curved universes and the unknowable.

Professor Martin Bridson is the Whitehead Professor of Pure Mathematics at Oxford University, President of the Clay Mathematics Institute, and a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. He is a prominent and passionate advocate for mathematics, both nationally and internationally.

Professor Bridson is renowned for his work in geometry, topology and group theory. Diverse encapsulations of symmetry, quantifications of complexity, and notions of curvature provide unifying themes for much of his work.

Join us at the Edgbaston Park Hotel and Conference Centre for a view of Mathematics from all angles.

Tickets are free but booking is essential. Visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/distinguishedlectures



MADE AT UNI

RESEARCH IN FOCUS

LIVER TRANSPLANTS

Universities UK has recognised Birmingham's liver transplant research amongst the UK's 100 best breakthroughs for the significant impact it has had on people's everyday lives.

The UK's Best Breakthroughs list: '100+ Ways Universities Have Improved Everyday Life', was compiled by Universities UK – the umbrella group for UK universities – as part of its MadeAtUni campaign, which aims to change public perceptions of universities and bring to life the difference they make to people, lives and communities across the UK.

The campaign also aims to demonstrate how universities are at the forefront of some of the world's most important discoveries, innovations and social initiatives, including the discovery of penicillin and ultrasound scans to check the health of unborn babies.

WHY BIRMINGHAM, WHY LIVER?

Birmingham has the largest liver transplant programme in Europe and has been at the forefront of liver transplantation since the pioneering work of Sir Peter Medawar, who was awarded a Nobel Prize in 1960 for his tissue grafting work.

Recent years have marked significant milestones for our liver research: 2017 saw the 30th anniversary of the Centre for Liver Research at the University and in the same year we witnessed the 5,000th liver transplant being performed across Birmingham Health Partners – a strategic alliance between the University of Birmingham, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and Birmingham Women's and Children's

NHS Foundation Trust.

Today, researchers at the University are carrying out groundbreaking research using perfusion machines, which act like a life support machine for donor livers. The technology allows medics to assess whether an organ, once deemed too high risk for transplant, would function if it were to be transplanted. It's really important work because the latest figures have shown that around 20 per cent of patients die whilst awaiting a liver transplant, while 400 livers donated each year are rejected as being too high risk for transplantation.

Professor David Adams, Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences at the University of Birmingham and Director of Birmingham Health Partners, said:

'It is a fantastic achievement for the University to be featured in the UK's Best Breakthrough list.

'We're extremely proud of the work of our academics and the difference they are making to people, lives and communities.

'The MadeAtUni campaign is an incredibly important initiative for the University of Birmingham as it allows students, alumni, the local community and the wider population to understand the work that we do and the impact it has.

'The liver transplantation research and

CLAIRE DOGGETT, HEAD OF CAMPAIGNS AND REPUTATION IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Representatives from Birmingham, Carla Amos, Director of Student Recruitment, Simon Lerwill, Director of Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) and myself have enjoyed shared membership of UUK's campaign advisory group. We have helped shape this fantastic campaign, aimed at those members of the public who perceive that universities only teach. Research carried out by UUK showed that once a person knew that universities did amazing research they immediately saw the value of them.

The MadeAtUni Campaign will continue to run throughout 2019 and its success will depend on the sector getting involved. So please support the campaign by using the #MadeAtUni whenever you post or retweet University of Birmingham research. The research area doesn't have to be featured in the Best Breakthrough's list and it can include policy and societal changes too as well as discoveries. The # is an easy way to tell people that it was MadeAtUni.

UUK's research also identified celebrities which the general public trust and the campaign features a number of them talking about how universities make a difference to our everyday lives.

To see more about the campaign, go to www.madeatuni.org.uk

work is the result of a 30-year collaboration between the University of Birmingham and our NHS partners and shows the power that close working between universities and the NHS brings to addressing major health problems.'

RESEARCH ETHICS

BY PAUL JACKSON

The issue of research ethics is an important one for all researchers. At the University we have two central ethics committees: HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Both the HASS and STEM committees are chaired by academic staff and consist of volunteer academics from across the relevant disciplines with the support from several lay members. HASS is co-chaired by myself (International Development) and Dr Iain Law (Philosophy), whilst STEM is co-chaired by Dr Carolyn Greig (Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences) and Dr Andrew Filer (Institute of Inflammation and Ageing). There is also a sub-committee dealing specifically with international clinical trials.

Reporting to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer Professor Tim Softley, the core role of these committees is to review the research carried out across the University to ensure that it meets the highest standards of scholarly and scientific integrity. Each member of the University is expected to act with integrity in their work as set out in the Code of Ethics and the Code of Practice for Research, and it is partly the job of the committees to make sure that we, as a group of academic peers, are happy that this is the case with every staff and PGR research project. Last year, over 2,000 projects were submitted for ethics self-assessment and around 700 full

research ethics applications were reviewed by the committees across a very wide range of disciplines.

This is a considerable responsibility for a voluntary peer network, and the Academic and Professional Services staff are supported by a dedicated research ethics team. At the end of 2018, Dr Birgit Whitman was appointed as the University's new Head of Research Governance and Integrity to continue to develop our approach to ethics and research integrity.

The demands of research ethics and the increasing number of research projects has led to a considerable amount of work that aims to increase the efficiency of the ethics review process, to raise awareness and to improve researcher engagement.

We are also aware of the increased burden that GDPR and research ethics places on PIs who want to undertake their own research. As researchers ourselves, we are keen to make the process as transparent and speedy as possible. This should be greatly enhanced by a new dedicated research ethics system that should be procured this year. We have already restructured the committees and have rationalised the way work is allocated to them, which should speed the process

Please be aware that your feedback on the ethics process is always welcome and if you are interested in becoming involved as a reviewer, please do get in touch to discuss this further, either with me (p.b.jackson@bham.ac.uk) or with Sue Cottam, Research Ethics Officer (s.l.cottam@bham.ac.uk). Without the continued and community-spirited efforts of our reviewers, the work of the committees would not be possible and many projects requiring ethics approval would not be able to go ahead.

up, and we are liaising with Health and Safety to develop clear processes on risk assessments for research.

One of the core issues we have is maintaining sufficient diversity and active numbers in each of the committees. Timely reviewing by peers is critical to the integrity of the system but this is usually where there may be delays. We also recognise that workload is an issue and this is a job involving good citizenry. Heads of School have been informed that membership of the research ethics should receive appropriate recognition (eg, via workload models).

Since we have restructured, we have also lost a number of members so we will be recruiting additional people to be part of this team. The ethics team does have an annual training day and is continuing to develop its training offering. A new online course is available at <https://canvas.bham.ac.uk/courses/27900>

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT WILL CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THE WORLD? THE TEAM BEHIND QUEST WRITES FOR *BUZZ*

‘CONSTANTLY QUESTIONING’ UNDERPINS OUR QUEST TO ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE THAT WILL IMPROVE LIVES AND HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS ACROSS THE WORLD.

Having a strong international research profile has never been more important. This ambition comes at a time when the international higher education environment is more competitive than ever and maintaining a top 100 position is of paramount importance to attract the best staff, students and research income.

You’ve seen our Birmingham Heroes, maybe you’ve been lucky enough to meet one, or even be one? Birmingham Heroes proves that by telling stories in an innovative way, we can build our reputation with a wide audience, demonstrating the value and impact of research discoveries, but how can we reach other audiences?

A significant measure of the international leagues tables is ‘academic reputation’, which quite simply is what other researchers think about our work. Over the last 12 months we have performed strongly in league tables, but if we are to keep pace with institutions overseas, we need to innovate, be better co-ordinated and apply our strategic expertise to ensure we continue to build our reputation with this research audience.

INTRODUCING QUEST

Quest is our new international brand and profile building campaign that reveals the stories behind our current research in an up-close, intelligent way. Led by the International Reputation team in External Relations, the campaign is aimed at researchers, building our global reputation

with insight, analysis and commentary. With a brand new, bespoke web presence located in the research section of the University’s website, Quest is a place where we can develop enduring relationships with loyal audiences. By not following the sector trend of being providers of the answers, we present a different angle about asking the right questions.

WHERE DID THE IDEA BEHIND QUEST COME FROM?

‘When we were developing the idea for the campaign, we knew that we needed to tap into the essence of the research process. What is it that drives researchers in their work?’ asks Jo Kite, Director of Communications and Reputation. ‘It’s a researcher’s drive to constantly question, the passion, and the ability to persevere that marks this out.

‘We also wanted to guarantee its authenticity. Quest needed to take a reference point from Birmingham Heroes, feel part of the family and echo what it means to be part of the University of Birmingham.’

JUDGING THE SUCCESS OF STORIES

Head of International Reputation, Richard Smith reveals one of his favourite examples of Quest’s engagement-driven content and an insight into how it is working. *‘Birmingham is becoming well known for our multi-disciplinary research into air pollution. The headline for a story on*

indoor air pollution from charcoal stoves asks how to ensure “advice on air pollution doesn’t backfire”. This has become one of our most popular articles with direct enquiries to the academic from other researchers and potential PhD students who want to connect and collaborate. These are the meaningful outcomes of Quest that help to build our reputation.’

QUEST WILL BUILD PRIDE IN OUR WORK

Professor Tim Softley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer, comments: *‘Quest authentically represents our research excellence and something that can be enduring. It’s not just a campaign, it’s now part of the fabric of how we tell our research stories to different audiences. Quest will be a way to further develop pride in our research within the University by becoming something we can all feel a part of, not least by learning more about the amazing work that takes place here.*

‘Discovering what colleagues across campus are working on is always fascinating and offers exciting possibilities to collaborate here. Quest will help to develop the satisfaction we gain from learning about ourselves and how we relate to each other; our approach of constantly questioning our understanding is the distinctiveness of the University of Birmingham.’

Quest

www.birmingham.ac.uk/quest

Continuous Innovation in Professional Services

Birmingham 2026 sets out our ambitions as a global university to raise our academic performance, grow research income and international student numbers. Professional Services play an important part in supporting these ambitions. Lee Sanders, Registrar and Secretary, explains more.



At the University, we aim for sector-leading Professional Services in those areas that will give us a competitive edge, in support of the University's academic mission.

Professional Services support every aspect of University life, creating an environment in which important things can and do happen. Being clear about how we will deliver our services, and being flexible in response to the challenges of the external environment, will be key themes over the coming years. We know some of these challenges already – the post-18 education fees and funding review, an increasingly competitive market for education and research, technological developments, Brexit, political flux, and a new regulatory environment through the Office for Students. In response, Professional Services has established a programme of activity to continue to improve our efficiency and effectiveness. The key to delivering this programme is partnerships – between Professional Services and academic colleagues, students and external stakeholders.

Learn more

You can find out more about the service standards we are introducing here: intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/continuous-innovation



Benchmarking and evaluation

Last year, you may have been one of the nearly 1,500 colleagues who responded to the **survey of effectiveness in Professional Services**, run by Cubane Consulting. The survey compared satisfaction with our services with those at similar universities in the UK and Australia. It highlighted strong satisfaction with some key areas of Professional Services including student recruitment, technician support, and pre-award research support. These are critical areas to support the University towards its 2026 goals, and it was pleasing to hear these are performing well. The survey also highlighted some room for improvement. In response, we have been focusing on three areas in particular: HR service delivery, post-award research support, and teaching administration. Good progress is already being made in these areas, and we'll provide more information about these in future updates on our work.



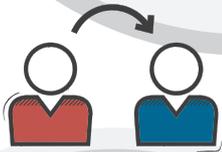
Improving service delivery

Our improvement programme is overseen by a **Service Effectiveness Board**, chaired by the Registrar and Secretary. The Board includes three senior academic representatives, **Professor Mark Sterling** (Head of the School of Engineering), **Professor Karen Rowlingson** (Director of Research, College of Social Sciences), and **Dr John Curnow** (Director of Education, College of Medical and Dental Sciences), as well as senior members of Professional Services. Elsewhere on these pages, you can hear from two of these colleagues who are making sure that academic feedback is being reflected in our work. The Board will oversee progress on our work on service effectiveness, providing challenge, guidance, and monitoring the performance of our service standards.



Service Standards

We know that it is important to be clear about expectations of Professional Services, and so we are introducing Service Standards across a range of Professional Services during 2018–19. Working with academic colleagues, we will define these standards so that colleagues know what they can expect from a service. Based on the results of the Cubane survey, our initial areas of focus have been staff recruitment, research contracts, and speed of response to technical issues in teaching rooms. Work is well underway in these areas, and we will be spreading service standards more widely over the course of the year. You can find out more about our work on service standards at: intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/continuous-innovation



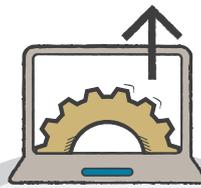
People and culture

People are at the heart of our work in Professional Services. Our Birmingham Professional programme supports professional development with regular events and workshops, and communities of practice. We have also established a Senior Management Forum to oversee a number of projects supporting Birmingham 2026, sharing best practice and leading cultural change.



Intelligent regulation

The demands of external regulation continue to grow, including through the new Office for Students, GDPR and UKVI. Of course, it is essential that we comply with external regulatory and legislative requirements, but we aim to do this in a proportionate way. Where we do have to implement regulatory requirements that affect the University community, we aim to do so without 'gold-plating'. We have established an 'Intelligent Regulation' community of practice to share good practice in this area.



Enhanced systems

Enhancing our IT systems is an important aspect of our improvement programme. New Core (the programme to replace our Finance, HR and Payroll systems) will go live in June, whilst StARS (the upgrade to our Banner student administration system) will be delivered over the next two years. These initiatives will improve our service effectiveness in these areas, and will allow us to operate more efficiently, shifting resources from transactional processes to value-adding activity.



'We are lucky to have a strong partnership between Academic and Professional Services at Birmingham, which ensures we are well placed to achieve our Birmingham 2026 ambitions. The idea of Continuous Innovation is not about reinvention; we are simply continuing our long history of successfully embracing new opportunities, in order to move the University forward.'

Professor Mark Sterling,
Head of School of Engineering



'The need to improve the University's post-award research support is clear, and vital to meeting the needs of our academic community, today, and in the future. The service improvement plan in post-award research support will bring together the newly established Grant Setup Facilitation team with the introduction of Worktribe and new Service Standards. The aim of this work is to provide a seamless and supported "PI journey" from idea to closure.'

Professor Karen Rowlingson,
Director of Research,
College of Social Sciences



'At its core, the Birmingham Professional is really about "what we do, and how we do it". Delivering effective Professional Services relies on the people and culture of the University and a partnership between academic and professional colleagues.'

We are developing and maximising the talent we have to make the most of the richness of skills within our staff. How we bring these aspects together in new and innovative ways will ensure continuous improvement.'

Cathy Gilbert,
Director of External Relations

STUDENT POLICE OFFICERS HELPING TO KEEP COMMUNITIES SAFE

Five University students are taking a sabbatical from their studies to work as Special Police Constables in their own neighbourhoods of Selly Oak and Edgbaston.

Starting their roles as part of the Blue Line scheme in October 2018, they are warranted officers with powers of arrest. While it is a voluntary role, they have received a bursary from the University to cover their costs for the year.

In post until September 2019, the officers are in addition to existing police officers, and work alongside neighbourhood police teams in Edgbaston and Selly Oak, boosting security in the area while giving the students invaluable experience.

Special Constable Eiliw Dafydd, who studies History and Politics, is enjoying the role, saying: *'Blue Line is a great opportunity to see if I would like a career in policing. Every day is different and I get to interact with a lot of people. I see us as very much part of the local community; we provide crime prevention advice and work with students to encourage them to report incidents to the police.'*

Philosophy student, Special Constable Carys Butlin said: *'We proactively target crime in our area, which covers the University campus. No two days are the same in this role; yesterday I went to a property to serve an arrest warrant in relation to a vehicle crime but on other days we patrol the neighbourhood and speak to people about their concerns.'*

Each of the Blue Line officers is coached by a local PC. Eiliw's coach, PC Thomson, said: *'I think the scheme has real value, as students are more likely to trust someone from their peer group.'*

Campus police officer PC Richards said: *'As far as I am aware the Blue Line officers are loving the challenge, and although it's not an easy transition to make, they seem to be handling it really well.'*

University of Birmingham Director of Student Affairs Jon Elsmore said: *'We have always had a close relationship*



with West Midlands Police, and this is the logical next step. The University is part of both Edgbaston and Selly Oak and we have a responsibility to contribute to our local communities. The Blue Line scheme allows us to give a group of students an opportunity to gain skills and experience the realities of policing, while contributing to the safety and security of their own neighbourhoods.'

The Special Constables have been trained and are skilled to handle anything that a police officer would, including and not limited to patrols, warrants, arrests, disorder, crimes, victim support and more. They receive the same support as any officer, with access through West Midlands Police to wellbeing services, occupational health, supervisor support, mentoring, the Police Federation and all the relevant clubs and associations.

CHAMPIONING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

A highlight of the Spring Term is events that take place to celebrate LGBT History Month and International Women's Day and once again staff and students have been busy preparing a programme of events to celebrate the diversity that enriches our campus.

The LGBT History Month launch event took place on 4 February at 2.00pm with a special Birmingham Professional event at which the Academic Registrar, Stephen McAuliffe talked about his own career journey and reflected on the importance of developing an LGBTQ inclusive campus.

Events throughout the month include tours and lectures at The Barber and a book group. The Rainbow Network, which programmes the event with HR, will be hosting a special 'Meet the Network event'. The final event, run in collaboration with Queen Elizabeth Hospital Trust, will be a one-day conference exploring the experiences of LGBTQ health service users.

Professor Robin Mason, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) and Executive Lead for LGBT Equality, says: 'LGBT

History Month is an important time for the University to demonstrate its strong support for transgender and sexual orientation equality. Once again our staff and students have worked hard to develop an informative and interesting programme and I encourage everyone to get involved.'

The new University Women's Network will be launched on Monday 4 March. The network will provide a forum for women from across the University to discuss and contribute to a range of empowerment and equality issues. In addition, the BAME Network is delighted to welcome Candice Braithwaite, the founder of 'Make Motherhood Diverse' as the guest speaker at a panel event on 8 March. This event is being supported by the WIN WIN and Women's Networks.



Professor Una Martin, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equalities, explains why events such as these are such an important part of the University's Equality Agenda.

'One of my priorities during my time in post has been to increase the level of engagement with equality and diversity issues and so it is heartening to see the extent of partnership working that has gone into producing this year's programmes. Creating an inclusive environment is central to the University's core mission to be a global force in teaching and research and events such as LGBT History Month and International Women's Day are a chance to acknowledge and increase our understanding of equality issues.'

For more information about the BAME Network event with Candice Braithwaite, please visit:
www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/bame

To find out more about the University's staff networks visit:
intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/collaboration/equality/Areas-and-themes/staff/groups-and-support/Staff-Networks.aspx

For more information about all the events taking place, please visit:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/lgbt-history-month/index.aspx
www.birmingham.ac.uk/events/international-womens-day/International-Womens-Day-2019

transforming our campus

Green Heart starts beating...

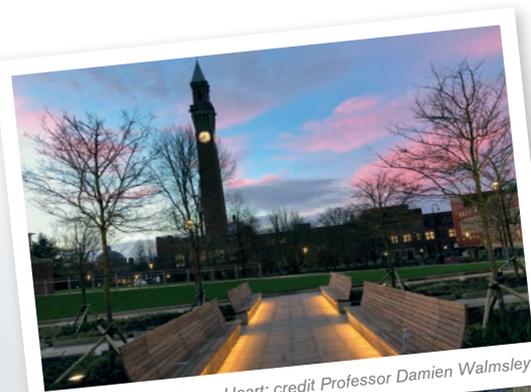
The Green Heart is now complete and open to staff, students and visitors. Many people will already have begun to incorporate it into their routes across campus between buildings.

The Green Heart represents a transformation of the Edgbaston campus, bringing 160 additional trees onto the site, nesting sites and rain gardens to help campus drainage.

Consultation with staff and students in 2016 helped inform the design, which includes:

- A range of wildflowers and native plants
- Space for markets, performances and events, including a grass auditorium
- A new café and bar – due to open in the spring
- Energy-saving technologies, zoned lighting, and energy-generating paving
- Improved signage and access to information
- Dedicated areas for art, sculptures and the University's collections

The newly revealed views across campus have not been seen since before the old library was constructed, and bring the campus full circle, to how it was envisaged in the early 20th century, but with a distinctly 21st-century feel. There is comprehensive Wi-Fi coverage, with USB charging points in the benches and improved step-free access from one end of the campus to another.



Sunrise over the Green Heart: credit Professor Damien Walmsley



The Green Heart

Information and signage will be provided by eight brand-new digital totems, which were thoroughly tested by staff and students in 2018. These totems include an interactive map, through which people can find their way to any building on the Edgbaston campus, with a simple link to any smartphone. Students will be able to use the totems to find out which study spaces are available and where there are free computers in campus PC clusters. Content will be developing in the coming months, and they will be able to be used for promoting University events and campaigns.

The interactive map on the totems will also be available in Android and iOS apps at www.birmingham.ac.uk/maps



Green Heart Festival

In June 2019, we will launch the Green Heart Festival, a celebration of the new Edgbaston campus. With events from across the University, led by staff, students and partners, the 12-month festival is set to be the biggest of its kind ever held on campus.

The launch weekend, held on 8 and 9 June, will include daytime family activities, evening prom-style performances in the new amphitheatre from University groups, a choral event led by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with 3,000 singers, nature trails, dance and much more. This will then be followed by four seasons of events, celebrating the Green Heart as it grows and blooms through the year.

Get involved with the Green Heart Festival: www.birmingham.ac.uk/greenheartfestival



University **teams up** with the

Premier League to tackle concussion

Footballers from the Premier League are participating in a new groundbreaking concussion study to review and potentially enhance concussion diagnosis in football. The study, run by the University and University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) NHS Foundation Trust and funded by The Drake Foundation is being supported by the Premier League Doctors Group, which is allowing access to players throughout the 2018–19 football season.

The study collects saliva and urine samples from injured Premier League players, as well as uninjured 'control' players, by club doctors immediately post-match and at further time points over the course of a player's recovery. The samples are then brought to campus where they are tested using the 'Birmingham Concussion Test' by academic neurosurgeon Professor Tony Belli, who has led the research over the past decade.

The test looks for molecules in the blood, known as microRNAs, which can act as biomarkers to indicate whether the brain has suffered injury. The patented technology is being commercially developed in partnership with Mirna Diagnostics Limited, which owns the global patent licence of these biomarkers.

This builds on research also being carried out by the University of Birmingham and UHB, which began in 2017 and is currently ongoing, testing the urine and saliva of concussed Rugby Football Union players – part of the ongoing REpetitive COncussion in Sport (RECOS) study, being led by the College of Medical and Dental Sciences and UHB through The National Institute for Health Research Surgical Reconstruction and Microbiology Research Centre (NIHR SRMRC).

In the future, it is hoped that the Birmingham Concussion Test could be used pitch-side and have the potential to assist in return-to-play decisions or

concussion diagnosis across sports, from grassroots to professional, in addition to military and other frontline settings.

Professor Tony Belli, Academic Neurosurgeon at the University of Birmingham and UHB and Director of NIHR SRMRC, said: *'Early and accurate diagnosis of concussion is one of the biggest challenges we face clinically and is particularly a major concern in the sporting world.'*

'This exciting new study is an important addition to the breadth of research we are undertaking into concussion and player welfare in sport more broadly.'

Dr Valentina Di Pietro, molecular neuroscientist at the University of Birmingham's Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, said: *'Sports around the world want a more reliable and objective assessment for concussion than currently exists and the test we have developed in the laboratory is the first step in the development of a pitch-side test to enhance assessment.'*

Dr Patrick O'Halloran, Sports Concussion Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, Sport and Exercise Medicine Registrar at UHB, and Academy Doctor at Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, said: *'This research has the potential to benefit professional, grassroots and youth-level footballers alike, making the process for diagnosing concussion as effective as possible. Similarly, this may be valuable in other sports or for patients in NHS Accident*

and Emergency departments.'

Gordon Taylor OBE, Chief Executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, said: *'We are pleased to support all our Premier League members who are taking part in this innovative study which will hopefully bring a health and safety benefit to players at all levels of our game.'*



This latest study will also look to evaluate the effectiveness of the current Premier League Doctors Group Standard Operating Procedure for diagnosis of concussion. When a team doctor suspects a player has been concussed, the following data will be sought to accelerate and more accurately diagnose any potential concussion:

- Pitch-side assessment
- Video review of the incident at the pitch-side
- Subsequent clinical reviews of the player after the match and in the days following the game
- The time course and trajectory of recovery post injury

CAMPUS CURIOSITIES

What is it?

Eduardo Paolozzi,
The Silken World of
Michelangelo from
Moonstrips Empire News,
1967

Where is it?

Research and Cultural
Collections, © Trustees
of the Eduardo Paolozzi
Foundation, Licensed
by DACS 2019

Disney's *Mickey Mouse*
and Michelangelo's
David are juxtaposed at
the centre of this vivid

and intense screenprint by Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi. The assemblage of popular and classical icons is a common theme throughout Paolozzi's diverse artistic output, which includes screenprints, sculpture, textiles and ceramics. At the heart of this recurring motif is the artist's theory that all things, whether mass-produced everyday ephemera or a fine art masterpiece, form equal counterparts within the same visual continuum. The juxtaposition of images, through random assemblage and formal visual association, is used as a Surrealist strategy in order to identify hidden meanings and unconscious, libidinal drivers within mass culture.

Moonstrips Empire News, from which this print is taken, was created as a portfolio of 100 loose-leaf screenprints housed in a day-glo pink acrylic box. In line with Paolozzi's Surrealist preoccupations with chance and the uncanny, there is no set order for the prints in *Moonstrips*. Instead, the viewer is invited to perform the role of editor exploring the tensions between choice and chance within the predetermined visual language created by the artist. Imagery is lifted from diverse source material; from cartoons to scientific handbooks, classical icons to kitsch, machine parts to vibrant geometric patterns. All interact on equal ground to present an eclectic, satirical and irreverent vision of oversaturation and excess in late 20th-century culture.

Find out more...

Moonstrips Empire News and other works by Eduardo Paolozzi held by Research and Cultural Collections will be exhibited in the Rotunda Gallery on the first floor of the Aston Webb Building until 17 May 2019. You can also view other works by the artist on permanent public display throughout the campus. For more information, visit RCC's website www.birmingham.ac.uk/rcc/paolozzi



Chancellor's column

Our degree ceremonies are renowned for being some of the most impressive of any university. During the December ceremonies, a 94-year-old, retired British army Brigadier – and a University of Birmingham alumnus – was present to see his grandson graduating. It was a touching and proud moment for him, his family and for our university.

I myself am proud to say my maternal grandfather, my mother and her brother are all University of Birmingham alumni, with myself now a member of the University family – the third generation to be so.

It is these generation-long links that strengthen the bonds of the University to our students and alumni, including our international students.

One of the ceremonies I presided over featured our History of Art graduates, who last year took part in a new exhibition at the Barber Institute, the first in an exciting new partnership with the Royal Collection Trust – *Drawn to Perfection*.

The beauty of this partnership was not just the privilege for us as a university to exhibit these special items from the Royal Collection – usually only exhibited in the Royal Palaces – but the way in which we have done this; with our students going to the Royal Collection Archives, choosing the items and then curating the exhibition themselves.

The exhibits included exquisite work from Renaissance and Baroque artists, including Bernini, Caracci, Claude and Poussin, and the keeper of The Royal Collection and his team are delighted with the outcome. This is going to be the first of many exhibitions in partnership with the Royal Collection Trust.

I went to see it myself and was overwhelmed by how professionally and impressively our students had executed the project. It was world-class, and the validation of their excellent work were the numerous glowing remarks by our visitors from all over the world. I wanted to share just a few of my favourites:

'Fascinating drawings and details behind the works. Very inspired.'

'Beautifully presented with a wealth of information – well done!'

'Awe-inspiring!'

The Barber Institute is one of the jewels in our university's crown, and one of the top four university museums in the UK. This exhibition is a perfect example as to why.

It is an historic institution and on a personal note, I was able to take pictures of the Royal Collection exhibition for my 82-year-old mother in India, who graduated in History of Art herself! She spent many happy hours at the Barber Institute as an undergraduate, and, was over the moon!

Lord Bilimoria is the founder and chairman of Cobra Beer, Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and the founding Chairman of the UK India Business Council.



Public Engagement: Watermarked into ‘everything we do’

Universities are increasingly focusing on what they can do to make sure that the incredible research that takes place within them is accessible and understandable for members of the public, and Birmingham is no exception. In fact, over recent years our efforts to support researchers to carry out public engagement with research (PER) has increased rapidly and now includes a wide range of support activities and schemes (as we recently highlighted in the October edition of *Buzz*). To help us understand how far we've come as an institution, we recently underwent the Engage Watermark assessment.

The Watermark is a charter mark scheme run by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) that recognises commitment to embedding high-quality engagement into the research process and involves rigorous assessment and action planning. The result was announced at the NCCPE's annual conference, Engage, on 29 November, where Professor Tim Softley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer, was presented with a Silver Watermark Award.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood, said: *'Innovation and engagement are at the heart of everything we do in Birmingham. We are committed to engaging with a wide variety of publics to improve the design and delivery of research and learning, exciting people about knowledge and discovery, and ensuring that our work makes an impact. We are enormously proud to have been awarded a Silver Engage Watermark and see it as a great opportunity to further develop our commitment and excellence in public engagement.'*

Winning a Silver Engage Watermark is a significant achievement. It demonstrates that we have made significant progress in addressing support for public engagement. At the University of Birmingham, our Public Engagement with Research (PER) Team support researchers at every stage, with everything from activity design and opportunities to try PER, to grants, funding and specialist training. We focus on working strategically to build momentum, culture change and to effectively support all of our research that matters.

Paul Manners, Director of the NCCPE said *'Since the early days of the NCCPE we have been championing a culture in higher education where public engagement can*

thrive. The Engage Watermark offers a benchmarking opportunity for institutions to evidence their commitment and achievements – combined with intelligence gathering to inform their future planning. We are delighted to be able to award the University of Birmingham a Silver Engage Watermark.

'Public engagement is supported really well at the University. There is strong commitment from senior leaders; flourishing activity in a range of schools and settings; the central team work with strategic purpose and intent, and support for engagement is increasingly being built into the University's systems and processes. As one of your senior leaders told us, "the time for engagement has come" – and we look forward to following their progress in the years ahead'.

But there's no time to rest on our laurels, the PER Team are keen to keep up the momentum that's been created and continue to develop the support for research engagement across the Institution over 2019 and beyond. We've just launched the new Light of Understanding Award for Excellence in Public Engagement, which will be presented at PER Day 2019 on 5 April by Professor Alice Roberts and are also busy recruiting keen engagers to take part in our Research at the Heart of Brum 'research markets' that will be popping up in the Green Heart and at community events across the summer.



To find out more or get involved you can find us via:
 Twitter: [@UoBengage](#)
 Blog: [ThinkPe.wordpress.com](#)
 Newsletter: [tiny.cc/UoBengage](#)
 Email: engage@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Hisham Mehanna and David Evans... in our words



Professor Hisham Mehanna is the Chair of Head and Neck Surgery, and Director of the Institute for Global Innovation (IGI). David Evans is the Institute's Head of Projects and Partnerships. When Hisham is not searching for time to practise his newly discovered drumming hobby and when David is not seeking out ancient history, they come to work and run this recently formed institute.

What are your backgrounds and how did you become involved with the IGI?

'I came to the UK 25 years ago during the Gulf War as a third-generation refugee from Palestine; this is one of the reasons that I got involved with the IGI, but also as a clinician I decided to get involved in research to widen the impact on people beyond my job as a surgeon,' says Hisham.

'I joined the University in 2010, working in research support. I'd originally studied to become a diplomat and it was my interest in big, international-scale problems that led to my involvement with the IGI,' says David.

What are the priorities for the IGI?

Hisham explains: *'The IGI has been brought together to find solutions to the world's most pressing challenges – the things that affect humanity at a global level. These challenges can only be addressed by working collaboratively across and within disciplines.'* David adds: *'We put out a call for ideas to the University community asking for suggested challenges. We distilled all the responses down into four main themes – Gender Inequality, Resilient Cities, Water Challenges and 21st-Century Transnational Crime – as well as some emerging themes.'*

Why is using a multidisciplinary approach best?

'A "one lens" approach won't tackle big global problems. You need expertise from lots of different areas to understand the root of the problem but also to produce solutions that are sustainable and have a significant lasting effect,' says Hisham. David points out: *'What you don't want to do is to displace problems from one area of society to another; if you approach problems in isolation often you end up moving these problems around, whereas if you tackle it from a multidisciplinary perspective, you are more likely to make meaningful progress.'*

Hisham, as a surgeon are there lessons you've applied to the IGI from the operating theatre?

'A lot of surgical and clinical practice is transferable to what we're doing in the IGI: teamwork and cross-discipline working, and of course international collaborations in the medical field have taken place for a long time. Underpinning all of the work, is the ability to focus on what is most beneficial to the person, and in the IGI's case, to humanity.'

How does the IGI make use of the existing networks at the University?

'One thing that we've really benefited from is the hard work that of a lot of teams have already put in. The International Office, for example, has built great foundations for international collaboration, and the support for research across the Colleges and the Development and Alumni Relations Office has helped our researchers to uncover solutions that we can readily engage with. The Institute for Advanced Studies is also an important partner for us because they've been promoting this way of working for a number of years and have the mechanisms to do it,' says David. *'We have an amazing depth and breadth of research across diverse topics, and what the IGI brings is coordination and facilitation by giving people space and time to work collaboratively,' adds Hisham.*

Have there been any early successes?

'It's early days, but in the year that we've been up and running, we've managed to bring together teams to work on new disciplines, commissioned over 50 projects and have secured funding from the British Academy and Research England. We've also attracted high-profile visitors from the Department for International Development, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and Save the Children. I sense that there is a buzz about the multidisciplinary research taking place at the University,' says Hisham.

What are the long-term goals of the IGI?

Hisham: *'We want to lead the national and international agenda on the global challenges, and as part of that we are working on establishing an international global challenges forum to explore solutions for these problems.'*

What do you think is the biggest challenge to overcome?

'Humans,' reply both. Hisham points to the challenge of overcoming inequality – *'inequality in gender, money, opportunity or education.'* David agrees: *'The burden of most big global challenges primarily falls on the people who have the least.'*

If you would like to find out more about the work of the IGI, or to get involved, please visit: birmingham.ac.uk/research/global-goals/igi/index.aspx