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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Medical *Matters*

Provost's view



Provost and Vice-Principal Professor Adam Tickell

YOUR BUZZ

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Views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the University or a statement of University policy. All submissions may be subject to editing. The Editor's decision is final.

Front cover image:

David Adams, Professor of Hepatology, Dean of Medicine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences (MDS).

I have written before about *This American Life*, a weekly radio show and podcast from National Public Radio in the United States. The programme uses personal stories, to explore some big questions about American society. The editorial is clearly liberal but, in assuming that listeners are intelligent, it expects you to make up your own mind.

As an Englishman, there is a comfort in hearing about problems in another country: I can, quite literally, do nothing about the racialised nature of policing or about the American way of death. But there is of course, a but; the United States is very different to the UK but there are also similarities that two recent episodes have brought into sharp relief.

In 'Three Miles', a reporter talked to former staff and students involved in a twinning scheme between one of the most deprived schools in the US and one of the most privileged. The aim of the scheme was that disadvantaged students would be able to realise their potential and that the other group would appreciate their good fortune. There isn't space in this column for the details, you can listen to the full episode online (number 550), but in a narrow sense the experiment failed. Some of the brightest pupils failed to get into a good college, while those that did struggled when they got there as they were dislocated from much of what they knew.

In 'Birds and Bees' (episode 557), the programme returns to a depressingly recurrent theme over the years: sexual harassment and assault in universities. In this case, the journalist reports on a scheme at Buffalo State University in New York that aims to educate and enlighten male students about consent in sexual relationships. Listening to the young men, it is clear how little they know about relationships, even while they live in a culture saturated with sexual imagery.

As I say, the specific contexts for these stories are American but the challenges are ones that we recognise at the University of Birmingham. The University was founded as an institution both of Birmingham and for Birmingham and we continue to take this latter responsibility very seriously. One of the most important ways that we do this is by working to ensure that children in our city and our region can benefit from a transformational education. Under our Access to Birmingham (A2B) programme we work in partnership with schools in the West Midlands to help

children from backgrounds without a history of participation in higher education. When they come here we ensure that A2B students can manage a transition that is difficult even for students who have always expected to go to university.

The evidence is that we are making good progress with our A2B scheme and other activities to support students from non-traditional backgrounds. The University has the sixth largest number of students in the Russell Group who progress to a degree from 'low participation neighbourhoods' and we have significantly more than universities like Bolton, London Metropolitan or Queen Mary University of London. We expect that the opening of the University School in September, which will draw its students from low participation catchments, will help us to make further progress.

Likewise, sexual harassment is not a uniquely American problem. There have been high profile cases at other English universities in the last two years and it would be naive to imagine that any university is immune. The University is working closely with the Guild of Students to ensure that all of our students, and all of our staff, treat each other with care and respect. We are proud to have collaborated in developing the 'Not On' campaign, that aims to create an environment in which sexual harassment of any kind is wholly unacceptable and to enable students to have the knowledge, ability and confidence to report and take action against all forms of sexual harassment. We will be working together during Welcome Week this year, and every year, to reinforce our central messages and both the University and the Guild will take action when our policies are breached.

Progress in both of these arenas will help all of our students, whatever their gender or background, and there remains a lot to do. Our appointment of a new Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality and Diversity will help. But it is the commitment of staff across the institution, and the support and collaboration of the Guild of Students, that gives me confidence that we can ensure that the University remains a place where students from a diverse range of backgrounds, with a diverse range of interests and experiences, can meet, learn from one another and thrive.

Professor Adam Tickell
Provost and Vice-Principal

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



STAFF MOBILITY – U21

Universitas 21 is a leading network of 26 research-intensive universities in 16 countries – including the University of Birmingham, which is proud to be one of the founding members. As part of the University's commitment to the U21 network, the International Relations team provides funding for staff to learn and share best practice with partner institutions.

U21 Staff Fellowships are designed to provide support to academic and non-academic staff who have demonstrated innovation and excellence in their field, and who are likely to benefit from an extended period of professional development which, in turn, will benefit the University. Last year, seven of these Fellowships were awarded, totalling £20,000.

Elsewhere, Special Projects and Small Exploratory funding is focused on assisting staff to initiate institutional collaborations with U21 partners.

For students, U21 also offers PhD scholarships, undergraduate travel bursaries and several overseas summer schools and conferences hosted by partner institutions.



As a leading global institution, the University encourages both its students and staff to make the most of the international opportunities available to them.

STUDENT MOBILITY

The University is committed to producing global citizens and providing students with as many opportunities as possible to internationalise their degree. Each year more than 500 students spend time abroad as part of their degree programme and benefit tremendously from the increased confidence and different academic perspective that this provides.

Many of these students are studying modern languages, but there are opportunities for undergraduates and PhD students from all departments, with the exception of MDS as they do not currently offer study abroad. Many of the University's near 300 exchange partners teach in English, so it is not always the case that students need a second language. This extends not only to English-speaking countries such as the USA or Australia, but also to destinations such as Sweden and Hong Kong.

Students may go abroad for a full academic year, while others study abroad for one semester. There are various sources of financial assistance for students who study abroad including a higher rate of student loan, means-tested

refunds of certain costs by Student Finance England, and various scholarships.

The Study Abroad and Exchanges Office holds information sessions about opportunities on offer during Welcome Week and twice on every open day, which staff are welcome to attend. The Office also delivers briefings and is available to attend departmental meetings as required.

The Study Abroad and Exchanges Office has an enquiry desk in the Aston Webb Building in Room 131. The desk is staffed weekdays during term from 10.00am–12.00noon and 2.00–4.00pm. Staff and students are encouraged to call in with questions.

More information:

studyabroad@bham.ac.uk
www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/study-abroad.aspx

STAFF MOBILITY – ERASMUS+

All academic or senior administrative permanent members of full-time staff at the University may apply to undertake a staff training visit through the European Union-funded Erasmus+ exchange programme. The exchange can be with a partner institution or an enterprise within Europe lasting from five working days to a maximum period of six weeks.

The key aims of Erasmus+ include supporting professional development of staff, developing international co-operation with European partners and increasing institutional profiles internationally.

Exchange programmes can include job shadowing, training events, and training at a partner higher education institution or another relevant organisation. In addition, participants

on Erasmus+ can return with a good network of new international contacts and enhanced language skills.

More information and how to apply for U21, Erasmus+ and other mobility opportunities for staff can be found on the International Relations intranet pages: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/external/international/relations/index.aspx>.

The owls are about to land!

The University of Birmingham will be hosting two 165cm tall owls on our Edgbaston campus as part of the Big Hoot this summer.

The Big Hoot is a public art project and charity initiative that will see around 100 individually designed giant owls placed at locations around Birmingham, creating a trail for residents and visitors to the city to follow as they visit as many owl locations as possible.

After ten weeks of the owls being on display, they will be auctioned off to raise funds for Birmingham Children's Hospital. Our owls' designs have been chosen by the Cultural and Research

Collections team and are under strict embargo at the moment but staff will be the first to see what they look like when the designs are unveiled.

The owls will arrive at the beginning of the summer and will be in residence on campus until the early autumn. The exact date they will land is yet to be confirmed.

For more information, please visit:
www.thebighoot.co.uk



Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series

Professor Geoff Eley:
What Produces Democracy?
Revolutionary Crises, Popular Politics, and Democratic Gains in Twentieth-Century Europe
Wednesday 1 July, 6.00–7.00pm
Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building

Geoff Eley is the Karl Pohrt Distinguished University Professor of Contemporary History, as well as being a faculty member of the German Department, at the University of Michigan. He is an internationally renowned scholar with broad research interests including German and British history, global history, the European Left, nations and nationalism, citizenship, social theory, and the relationship of history to theory and the social sciences.

Eley's work has focused on the radical nationalism in imperial Germany and fascism, and includes theoretical and methodological reflections on historiography and the history of the political left in Europe. His work is widely published with his most successful book *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* being translated into six different languages. This lecture forms part of the 'Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture Series' which aims to reflect on the major social, cultural, and policy issues of our time.

There is still time to #UoBpartofit



Colleagues across the University can help to celebrate the success of the Circles of Influence fundraising campaign, which entered its final 100 days on 23 April. Circles of Influence is on track to exceed its £160 million target, making it the most successful higher education campaign outside of Oxbridge and London.

The website www.uobpartofit.com is packed with videos, photos and more showcasing all that the campaign's 10,000 donors and 5,000 volunteers have achieved so far. Explore campus

developments, meet a graduate of the A2B scholarship scheme, and find out more about the £5.5 million of funding for life-saving medical research. Circles of Influence is making a difference locally and across the globe and it's not too late for you to join in.

You can still make a donation, share campaign success stories and retweet our fascinating campaign facts – look out for #100days daily updates on Twitter @birminghamalum until 31 July.



Student Sam Griffiths on placement at the new library site

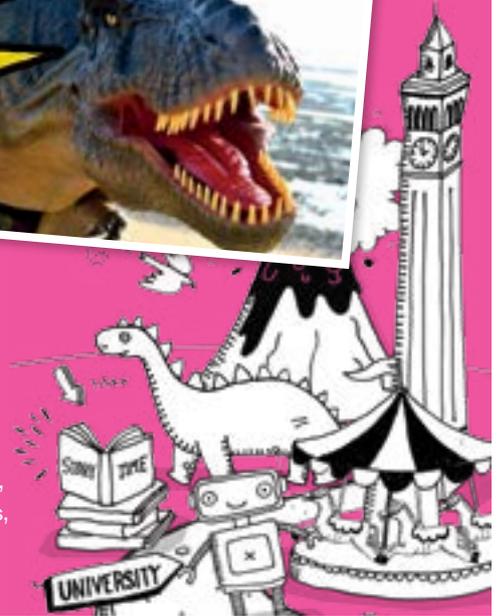
COMMUNITY DAY

Sunday 6 September 2015
11.00am–4.00pm, Edgbaston campus

Come along and explore the University's beautiful, historic campus and enjoy events and activities throughout the day. You can see for yourselves the great things that the University is doing for people here in the Midlands and around the world. Community Day is a great chance to explore the University's museums, historic house and garden and fine art gallery, get involved in our latest

research, and enjoy local produce from the farmers' market.

New for 2015, presented by the Lapworth Museum of Geology, this year's Community Day will feature a realistic animatronic *Tyrannosaurus Rex*. Other activities will include a bungee-trampoline, rocket building, face painting, culture trails, carousel, mask making, a climbing wall, live music and much more!



Recognition for pioneering professors



Two University professors were recently elected Fellows of the Royal Society, a fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering and medicine. Professor Yvonne Elsworth from the School of Physics and Astronomy, and Professor Bryan Turner, from the School of Cancer Sciences

(pictured), were selected through a peer review process on the basis of their excellence in science.

The Academy of Social Sciences also conferred fellowships to University staff Hilary Sommerlad, Professor of Law, and Nicholas Deakin CBE, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy.

Date for the diary

Birmingham Professional Forum
Tuesday 23 June, 11.00am–12.00noon
Elgar Concert Hall,
Bramall Music Building

This event is for all Professional Services colleagues including administrative, support and technical staff from across the University. Introduced by the Registrar and Secretary, Lee Sanders, the forum is a great opportunity to hear from colleagues on a wide range of topical subjects for both staff and the University.

CAMPUS CURIOSIT?ES



What is it?

Equestrian Figure by Lamidi Fakeye (1928–2009), 1950s

Where is it?

Research and Cultural Collections
Study Centre, 32 Pritchatts Road

This figure on horseback is an early example of the work of Lamidi Fakeye, one of the most well-known artists represented in the Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts. Fakeye was named a 'living treasure' by UNESCO in 2006. This piece was produced during his apprenticeship in the 1950s and depicts a Yoruba king (or Oba) on horseback. While it represents an Oba, it is also intended to represent one of the three kings within a nativity scene.

Equestrian Figure was commissioned by a Catholic missionary called Father Kevin Carroll. He set up the sculpture workshop in Oye Ekiti, Nigeria where Fakeye undertook his apprenticeship, in an attempt to encourage the development of a Nigerian Christian artistic tradition. The carvers incorporated traditional Yoruba elements into commissioned pieces that were displayed in missionary churches.

Learn more

For more information on this object and the Danford Collection, see our introductory Flickr gallery:

www.flickr.com/photos/researchandculturalcollections

transforming our campus

‘It is a hugely exciting time’

University accommodation rises to the top

The newest addition to Edgbaston's skyline has been officially topped out.

The University's new Chamberlain residence, which comprises a 21-storey tower and three smaller blocks, has reached its highest point of construction, ahead of opening its doors to students this autumn. Friends and neighbours of the University were among guests who travelled to the roof of the building on the Vale to see the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir David Eastwood, lay the final area of concrete at the top.

The hall, which rises around 75 metres from ground level, will be home to more than 700 first-year students from this September, replacing the previous Chamberlain Hall tower that closed its doors in 2006. The tower, which was also known as Eden Tower and High Hall, was built more than 50 years ago and was no longer fit for purpose as a home for students.

As the tower was removed, it left a noticeable gap on the landscape of Edgbaston – a gap which has now been filled by the new construction. The smaller

blocks are angled in such a way to open up views onto the Vale from the adjacent Church Road.

Students who live in the tower accommodation will themselves benefit from stunning views of either the Vale, a Grade II historic park and garden, the University central campus or the city, three miles away.

Lesley Stewart, Director of Residential and Environmental Services, said: *‘We have an ongoing commitment to invest in our accommodation stock to ensure that students coming to Birmingham have outstanding homes to live in, to get their University lives off to a flying start. The redevelopment of Chamberlain is the latest project to come to fruition after many years of hard work to get it to this stage and I am delighted that we have reached this important point. The tower looks wonderful, and I look forward to welcoming the first residents of the new Chamberlain this autumn.’*



Just one of the stunning views from the top of the tower



Lesley Stewart and Professor Sir David Eastwood at the topping out ceremony

University of Birmingham School is 'top' of its class

The pioneering University of Birmingham School, which opens to its first pupils in September, was also officially topped out recently.

The School's Principal Michael Roden and the University's Registrar and Secretary Lee Sanders jointly laid the final brick in the front of the building along with colleagues from contractors Willmott Dixon to mark the point that the building hit the top.

The School will open on the University's Selly Oak site with an intake of 150 pupils into Year 7 and 200 into the Lower Sixth Form. It is the first 11–18 university training school in the country and will be a centre for initial and ongoing teacher education and training, and research into improving educational practice. The curriculum will be informed by the latest research through links with the academic departments, the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and the School of Education.

Its key aim is to transform lives by creating a learning community equipped to maximise the personal and academic

achievement of all its pupils. It is setting out to bring together pupils from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and will draw pupils from across Birmingham with Year 7 places allocated according to the applicant's distance from one of four admissions nodes across the city – Selly Oak, Small Heath, Jewellery Quarter and Hall Green. There are no entrance requirements for Year 7 pupils.

Michael Roden said: *'In just a few short months, our first pupils will walk through the doors. It is a hugely exciting time, and this milestone is an important point to take stock, celebrate how much progress we have made and to look forward to the University of Birmingham School being a reality.'*

'We want our School to offer a best-in-class education; this outstanding building; the well-qualified, talented and inspirational teachers we have recruited and utilising access to the University of Birmingham and its facilities



Michael Roden lays the final brick



Lee Sanders addresses the guests at the topping out ceremony

will play a pivotal role in ensuring we really can help to transform the lives of those who attend.'

C Block opens its doors to staff

As part of the construction industry's Open Doors Weekend in March, staff, students and visitors were given the chance to take a much closer look inside C Block in the Aston Webb Building, which is currently being renovated to become the new Student Hub. The contractors Interserve ran a number of tours for anyone who wanted to have a preview of the space ahead of opening to students this autumn.

The new Aston Webb Student Hub will see the interior of C Block remodelled to house a number of student-facing teams including Careers Network, Student Services and Registry, as well as a reception, information zone and a suite of

one-to-one consultation rooms. The Hub will also include a mix of social and learning spaces and a 250-seat lecture theatre.

The Open Doors Weekend gave people the opportunity to take a sneak peek inside to see how work is progressing – including viewing some of the magnificent features of the building, which are being incorporated into 21st-century student space.

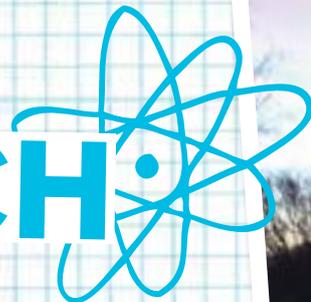
When complete, it will mean students will be able to access modern support facilities for a wide range of services and enquiries, staffed by colleagues dedicated to promoting student success, in a stunning space renovated to meet

the present and future needs of the University community.

Tim De Torre, Senior Surveyor at Interserve, led some of the tours. He said: *'I think opening the doors for University staff, and for anyone who wants to see what we are doing, is the perfect gateway for people to take a look.'*

'It's an opportunity for us to demonstrate exactly what is going on, what's gone before and what is going to happen, especially in a project like this. People can see outside the external façade, but it's important for events like this to show people inside, and demonstrate the nitty-gritty.'

ENTERTAIN, ENGAGE, ENRICH



The University's academics are stepping outside the lecture theatre to take their research into the community.

Public engagement is traditionally delivered as an open lecture, but amid a continuing growth of new, exciting forms of outreach and engagement, Birmingham academics are leading the way.

'Using inventive means can make research accessible for audiences that are harder to reach' said Sarah Cosgriff, Assistant STEM Coordinator. *'It is also a two-way street; the public can inform the direction of research and academics may be surprised at what they will learn from the public.'*

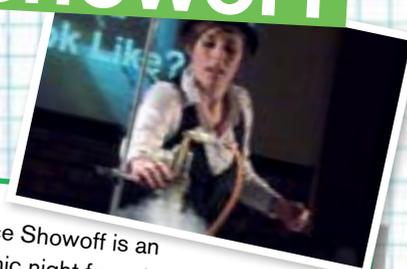
Jon Wood, Byrne Outreach Officer in Chemical Engineering said: *'I've seen science explained in many forms including*

a ceilidh, theatre and a pop-up book! Academics that translate their work for an external audience may find it challenging but I would say it is definitely worth it!

Academics interested in finding out more about public engagement activities can contact engage@contacts.bham.ac.uk or visit <https://thinkpe.wordpress.com>.

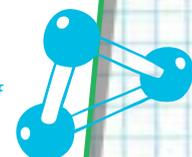
The content featured here is by no means an exhaustive list of the public engagement activities connected to the University but demonstrates some of the innovative means that researchers are utilising to open up pathways for dialogue beyond the boundaries of academia.

SCIENCE SHOWOFF



Science Showoff is an open mic night for scientists with up to nine minutes to do almost anything. Dr Rowena Fletcher-Wood, a Research Fellow in the School of Metallurgy and Materials recently took part in the event: *'I've done a performance with a vagon hand puppet on how Mossbauer spectroscopy can tell us whether vogons are going to blow up the earth. Performing on stage has enabled me to develop valuable speaking and acting skills, confront fears and new challenges. I'm very passionate about science communication and especially widening participation. Doing research is a continuing learning experience, and the most valuable thing I can do with my own learning is pass it on to others, pass on the knowledge and pass on the enthusiasm.'*

www.scienceshowoff.wordpress.com/welcome-to-science-showoff
 @ScienceShowoff



BRIGHT CLUB

Bright Club is a stand-up comedy night, compered by local comedians and featuring a local musician, with the added twist that all of the other performers are University researchers. The idea is that doing a stand-up comedy set is about the toughest sort of presentation that anyone can imagine; it increases the performers' skills set and is a great way of increasing their professional network. As a night of stand-up comedy it attracts a different audience to traditional forms of engagement.

Jim Bell, Marketing and Events Officer at the University Graduate School explains why he set up Bright Club in Birmingham: *'Bright Club is one of the most fun things that you can do and still be technically "doing work". Research affects people, but people also affect research. Without understanding between the people doing the research and the people affected by it then the whole relationship falls down, and everyone loses out.'*

'It's a comedy night that just so happens to feature a lot of people talking about research. The audience is, in the most part, people without a connection to the University – the sort of people that we can only reach by leaving our campus and going into the community. It gives you the ability to make strangers laugh at your research and legitimately say "I've done a bit of stand-up comedy".'

Next event: Thursday 16 July, Kitchen Garden Café, King's Heath
www.brightclubbirmingham.wordpress.com
 @BrightClubBum



ASTRONOMY IN THE CITY

Astronomy in the City is a series of free public events, each packed with astrophysics, stargazing, and tea and biscuits. Evenings begin with talks covering astronomical highlights and recent research, and a question-and-answer session, fusing enthusiasm for the night sky with excitement for the latest work done here in Birmingham.

'We've had a great response to Astronomy in the City; those attending range from children studying physics,

through couples on an imaginative date, to pensioners keeping their minds active. We hope we succeed in interesting people in science, and showing how the University is part of the local community' said Dr Christopher Berry, Research Fellow, Physics and Astronomy.

www.sr.bham.ac.uk/observatory/astronomyinthecity.php and
www.facebook.com/UoBObservatory
@UoBObservatory

PINT OF SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Pint of Science is a festival that aims to deliver interesting, fun, relevant talks on the latest science research in an accessible format – all in the pub. This year's themes included Atoms to Galaxies and Tech Me Out. Dr Charlotte Flavell, a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in the School of Psychology, is one of the festival coordinators. She said: '2015 is the first time Pint of Science has been held in Birmingham and we are really excited by the amount of interest it generated. The University hosts some of the world's top academics, conducting groundbreaking research and this is a great way of showcasing that. As taxpayers fund the majority of UK research, I think it's really important to be able to communicate what we are doing to the public. The fact that we get to leave the lecture theatre and get down to the pub is even better!'

Pint of Science also attracted Science Buskers, a team of volunteers on hand to conduct experiments with the audience.

www.pintofscience.co.uk
@pintofscience



FAME LAB

FameLab is a worldwide science communication competition, in which the challenge is to create a three-minute piece about scientific research that is fun and engaging for a lay audience. Dr Vikki Burns, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences, took part in 2014. 'I had decided to dress in a wetsuit and use a scuba diving analogy to explain the biological link between obesity, cytokines and depression. It is one of the highlights of my year, and I truly believe that all scientists should consider taking part. The format forces you away from the usual presentation styles and it really encourages you to pick out the most important messages and to use more imaginative approaches.'

www.famelab.org
@FameLabUK



DO TRY THIS AT HOME

The Bottle and Money Challenge

You will need a glass bottle with a thinner neck (approx. 500ml), a banknote and a steady table.

1. Place the banknote on the table, turn the bottle upside down, so the neck is facing downwards and place in the middle of the banknote.
2. You now have to remove the banknote without touching the bottle, with the bottle staying the same way up and not toppling over: it can move though.
3. The solution? Roll up the banknote from one end and push the bottle along.

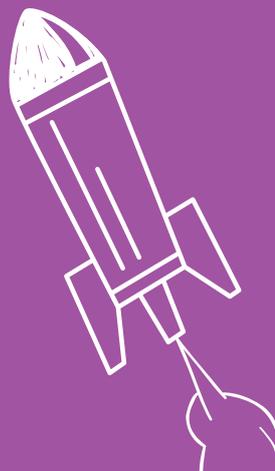
Here we are seeing Newton's First Law – objects that aren't moving tend to stay still, so the bottle wants to stay upright, but if you pull on the note you apply a force causing the bottle to topple over. Friction between the bottle and the banknote is important here as that is what causes the bottle to be pulled away by the banknote. However, if you roll the banknote and push gently, you apply enough force to overcome friction without the bottle toppling over.

Make a Rocket

You will need a 35mm film canister, water, a vitamin C tablet and plenty of space – it is best to create your rocket outdoors.

1. Fill the canister a third of the way up with water.
2. Add a quarter of the tablet to the water.
3. Snap the lid on top and quickly give it a shake, then turn it over so the lid is touching the ground.
4. Stand back and wait - it will take longer than you think, so give it some time.
5. Bang! You have now made a rocket!

As the tablet fizzes more in the water the fizz (carbon dioxide) builds up inside the canister and the pressure increases causing the canister to fly up!



A WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Over the last 18 months the University has delivered ten Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) across the sciences and humanities via the FutureLearn platform, engaging with over 105,000 learners worldwide. Further courses for 2015 are in development and ideas for future topics will be welcomed from across the University.

WHY DEVELOP A MOOC?

In addition to raising the University's profile, engaging new audiences and supporting student recruitment, MOOCs have also provided an ideal platform for both undertaking and showcasing research. Some courses have acted as a research tool, with the learner community acting as research subjects; others have provided an opportunity for staff to disseminate their research findings. They are also becoming increasingly important as impact case studies for Research Excellence Framework

exercises, as recognised in REF 2014.

The University has taken the opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with partner organisations as it develops and delivers new courses. The Shakespeare Institute teamed up with the Royal Shakespeare Company for *Much Ado about Nothing: in Performance* in March 2015 and the Department of History collaborated with the BBC for *WW1: Aviation Comes of Age* in February 2015, with future MOOCs planned.



THE BENEFITS OF RUNNING A MOOC



Dr Alison Cooper, a Senior Lecturer in Neuropharmacology in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, has worked on the 'Good Brain, Bad Brain' series of MOOCs:

'I decided to create a MOOC because I thought it would be a bit of a challenge. I do a lot of face-to-face, traditional campus-based teaching, but with e-learning you really have to think about how you can get your material across without the direct support that campus-based students benefit from.'

'I initially had concerns about how much time it was going to take to plan, film, write

materials and then interact with the website that was actually going to host these materials. I was pleasantly surprised by the whole process and particularly about the latter element as it actually turned out to be rather easy because I had technical support for that.

'When I launched my first course in January 2014 I didn't know what to expect, and when it hit 10,000 participants I wondered how I was going to manage! However, I was really pleased with how well it went; I got a lot of positive feedback which has been really useful for me in refining the materials and confirmed that the approach I was taking actually worked.'

'It's been great having emails from people who have sought me out, thanking me for

opening up a world that they previously had no access to; it's been fantastically personally rewarding. I have now worked on three courses, with plans for a fourth, Good Brain, Bad Brain: Alzheimer's Disease, later this year.'

If you are interested in developing a MOOC, or would like to find out more about what is involved, contact Liz Wragg, MOOC Operations Lead at the University: e.wragg@bham.ac.uk

More information on current MOOCs: www.birmingham.ac.uk/moocs



Living with the SHADOWS of the past

Dr Christalla Yakinthou, a Birmingham Fellow at the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security (ICCS), tells *Buzz* about her research into the impact of disappearance on wives of the missing in Lebanon.

Enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention, abduction or deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by people acting with the authorisation or support of the state, followed by a refusal to recognise that deprivation of liberty and concealment of the fate and location of the disappeared person.

It has enduring consequences. It is not just designed to harm the person who has been disappeared, but to cause continuous anxiety and fear to their families and their communities. Therefore withholding information about what happened is part of the crime; it is a crime designed to harm over a long period and ensure the perpetrators escape justice.

'You don't know your status. What are you? Not married? Not widowed? You don't know. You bury the feminine side of you deep inside, by force. I lost my life as a woman. I worked hard to give my children a standard of living that was acceptable to us. But I did not live the life I should have lived. My kids grew up. I don't have the resources to meet people or travel. I'm emotionally drained. I dream of continuing my education. I dream of doing something, earning a degree.'

I was asked by the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in Beirut to interview women whose husbands had been disappeared in Lebanon during the 1975–1990 war. The interviews aimed to understand the impact of enforced disappearance on this group of women.

Enforced disappearance of civilians and combatants in Lebanon during the 1975–1990 war is a taboo topic in a

society where the conflict and its legacy are not easily discussed. In the rare public discussions on the issue to date, the impact of disappearance on the spouses has been invisible, further entrenching the longstanding lack of accountability and denial of the rights of families of the missing and disappeared, including their right to appropriate remedies from the state.

When the families of the missing and disappeared are given the opportunity to speak publicly about the issue, their narratives usually focus on the circumstances of the kidnapping, arrest, or enforced disappearance and the likely suffering endured by their loved ones. This research marks the first time many women spoke about the impact of their husband's disappearance on the shape of their own lives.

Women married to missing or disappeared persons in Lebanon endure practical, legal, and emotional hardship. Legal and administrative procedures such as accessing bank accounts, applying for children's identity documents, claiming inheritance, transferring property titles, and remarriage are extremely difficult. If the missing person was the primary wage earner, financial hardship pervades the family's daily life. Compounding these problems, families often experience isolation, intimidation, and extortion, sometimes at the hands of those responsible for committing the disappearance.

In seeking redress in a patriarchal environment, these women also have to negotiate a social and political context that is highly discriminatory toward them,

'[They'd say] "wife of the kidnapped," poor her, poor her. In the beginning these words "poor thing" used to kill me. Then, when I stood on my own two feet . . . [they'd say], "Bravo, you are the sister of men." Who said I am? Why is a woman not allowed to be? . . . Because she is standing on her feet it means [she is a sister of men]? . . . No, I am not a man.'

contributing to the already overwhelming challenge of finding answers and support from relevant authorities. The report's aim was to provide information to those working to address enforced disappearance in Lebanon and makes recommendations that seek to provide practical guidance for policymakers on how to advance the rights of these victims and address their needs.

The work is available at: www.ictj.org/publication/living-shadows-past-impact-disappearance-wives-missing-lebanon

Quotes used in this piece are from interviews with women in Lebanon conducted by Dr Yakinthou as part of her research.

Healthy Living

As a society we know we need to eat better and exercise more but what form should this take and what are the long-term benefits of a healthy lifestyle? Researchers across the University are looking at the positive impacts of a nutritious diet and physical activity on our bodies, and what we can do to maintain good health. *Buzz* asked four academics to share their findings and offer tips on healthy living.

Dr Carolyn Greig, Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Ageing:

'The main focus of my research is the maintenance of healthy muscles in older age. The most effective way of doing this is by increasing physical activity. We can also build muscles using nutritional means, particularly using protein supplementation but older muscles are more resistant to the effects of both nutrition and physical activity compared with their younger counterparts; the real challenge now is to try and find the best ways of combining these interventions to maintain muscle quality. Recent evidence shows that simply being more active isn't quite enough – we also need to be less inactive in between times! Going to an exercise class is great but many are unaware that we are still at increased risk of a number of chronic diseases if we spend long periods sitting.'

Professor Janice L Thompson, Public Health Nutrition and Exercise:

'My research explores the role of diet and physical activity in reducing obesity and Type 2 diabetes. I work with ethnically diverse communities of all ages to understand how factors such as age, culture, and diverse life experiences affect people's abilities to make healthy lifestyle choices. Achieving a healthy lifestyle is really about finding a healthy balance between how much (and what) we eat, and how active we are.'

Professor Peymane Adab, Chronic Disease Epidemiology and Public Health:

'Childhood obesity affects a third of all children by age 11 in the UK. The 'West Midlands ActiVe lifestyle and healthy Eating in School children' (WAVES) study looks at whether we can help children maintain a healthy weight by intervening in schools, influencing children via their teachers and families. The intervention includes increasing opportunities for being physically active during the school day, practical sessions on preparing healthy meals, and using an iconic sports institution, Aston Villa Football Club, to deliver interactive health sessions.'

Dr Sam Lucas, Lecturer in Exercise and Environmental Physiology:

'Exercise is a uniquely effective and universal medicine against major non-communicable diseases, including protection against the age-related decline in brain function. While we know that exercise is good for brain health, the mechanisms by which this occurs remain poorly understood.'

My research aims to provide a greater understanding of how and what types of physical activity best improve health across the life span. I am particularly interested in examining the role that brain blood flow has in mediating the exercise-brain health relation, as well as determining exercise strategies and approaches to nutrition and environmental stress that optimise brain health. From a greater understanding of



how exercise improves health, we can enhance its potency and tailor interventions to address common health problems arising from sedentary lifestyles.

The good news is that the greatest reduction for risk for premature mortality is gained by moving from doing no activity to doing some activity. So get active, in any form... something is literally better than nothing!

Small changes to your diet can promote a healthy lifestyle:

- Consider portion size; a small reduction can help
- Limit the consumption of foods that are very high in calories such as sweetened beverages – including juices, fizzy drinks, and alcohol
- Try to eat more vegetables and whole grain foods
- Decrease intake of foods with a high fat or sugar content, which are more common in takeaways and meals prepared outside of the home

You don't have to run a marathon; these daily activities can help to stimulate a healthy lifestyle:

- Get up from sitting at least once an hour
- Go for a 20–30 minute walk, such as to work, the shops or the school run
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Do a little gardening or housework

SIMPLIFIED SHARING



SharePoint is a collaboration platform where users can store and maintain version control of documents to share with a specified group of users, update users using announcements, schedule meetings, and track information via lists, which are similar to Excel spreadsheets or a table in an Access database. In addition, simple processes will be able to be carried out with SharePoint using a workflow function that will be available later this year.

A range of site templates are currently available that come equipped with the relevant parts to enable staff to use SharePoint in a flexible way to support committees, manage projects, and to share and inform. These templates can be easily adapted to suit a user's needs and core SharePoint apps can be added. SharePoint sites can be requested by University staff, however access to existing SharePoint sites can be granted to students, for example, if they are collaborating with staff on a project or provide student representation on committees.

If you would like to find out more, please visit <https://collaborate.bham.ac.uk> (login with your ADF details) or come along to a SharePoint demo sessions:

- Monday 6 July 1.00–2.00pm
- Tuesday 7 July 11.00am–12.00noon
- Tuesday 7 July 1.00–2.00pm
- Tuesday 14 July 2.00–3.00pm
- Wednesday 15 July 11.00am–12.00noon
- Thursday 16 July 10.00–11.00am

To book a place on one of these sessions, please email Jessica Glover, Project Officer at: j.glover.1@bham.ac.uk.

'Using SharePoint for the IT Project Coordination Group (ITPCG) has streamlined the process of requesting and collating project updates using the SharePoint list app. The information is presented in a format within SharePoint that can be easily reviewed during ITPCG meetings.'

Heather Behan, Head of Project Office

'The College of Social Sciences Research Support Office uses SharePoint to create individual records for each external funding application being worked on across the College. This allows for an efficient and effective process of record keeping and helps us quickly locate information about funding applications. We can then use this information to feed into various reports and help plan our workload. It is also possible export the information from SharePoint into Excel making it easy to share with others.'

Alison Plumb, Research and Knowledge Transfer Administrator

'Using SharePoint in the Registrar and Secretary's Office has enabled more efficient storage and distribution of papers for the Registrar's Leadership Group. Managing distribution lists is much easier, and we have reduced the need to email large documents to multiple recipients.'

Mark Senior, Assistant Registrar

SHAPING THE DEBATE

Prior to the General Election the University played host to a series of events to engage the public with the democratic process.



PARLIAMENTARY HUSTINGS

In March the University held a Hustings event with the Prospective Parliamentary Candidates for the Birmingham Edgbaston Parliamentary constituency. The main topics debated were the future of the NHS, investment in the nuclear deterrent Trident, immigration and the lowering of the voting age to 16.



BBC'S NEWSBEAT

The BBC's *Newsbeat: The Election Debates* was held in the Great Hall and broadcast on BBC Radio 1, 1Xtra, the BBC News Channel and BBC Two. Presented by Radio 1 regulars Tina Daheley and Chris Smith, with representatives from the major parties, the debate was aimed at young voters and focused on issues such as the NHS, immigration and education.



BBC'S BIG ASIAN ELECTION DEBATE

The BBC also visited campus for the *Big Asian Election Debate* facilitated by the BBC's Asian Network and broadcast across 14 BBC local radio stations and the BBC News Channel. Hosted by presenter Nihal the event aimed to help the British Asian community decide who to vote for. Nihal was keen to stress that young people should be encouraged to take an interest in politics, 'You have to be able to change the world around you and one of the ways to do that is to become interested in politics.'



THE GUARDIAN'S 'YOU TALK, THEY LISTEN'

The *Guardian's You talk, they listen* event on immigration was held at the Business School hosted by presenter Rick Edwards. Academics from the University explored the issue and considered where the political parties stand. The panel consisted of Sonia Sodha, journalist and former political adviser, Colin Thain, Professor of Political Science, Dr Chris Allen, Lecturer in Social Policy and Jenny Phillimore, Professor of Migration and Superdiversity.



STAND UP BE COUNTED

The Sky News Stand Up Be Counted interactive stand was parked in Chancellor's Court for a day. The stand provided students and the wider public with a chance to engage with politics and a hub for Sky to broadcast live from campus.





news+views

Our regular feature gives *Buzz* readers a quick tour of the latest University news hitting the headlines and activity among our online community.

in the news...

Many articles about Birmingham research and expertise appear in local, national and international press every day. Here are just a few examples of our recent highlights.

On the night of the General Election, Dr Matt Cole provided expert commentary for BBC WM, analysing the results as they came in, and Dr Karin Bottom gave her thoughts to BBC WM when the dust had settled.

Professor Isabelle Szmigin was interviewed on BBC News Online about people's shopping habits and the rise of the 'Lidl class'.

PhD student Martin Ezcurra was part of a team that discovered a new dinosaur *Chilesaurus diegosuarezi*, a plant-eating relative of T-Rex. The story featured in national publications such as *The Independent*, *Daily Mail Online*, ITV, *The Telegraph*, and *Birmingham Post*. Internationally, the story enjoyed coverage in key outlets in Argentina, Austria, Australia, Chile, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Germany, Russia, Spain and in US outlets such as *The LA Times*, *USA Today*, NBC, *The Washington Post*, Fox News, *The Huffington Post*, *Science Daily*, Discovery and Al Jazeera America.

Professor Alice Roberts and Dr Andy Blannin were featured on BBC Two's programme *Britain's Favourite Foods: Are They Good For You?* They completed a study that showed that the best drink for rehydration after exercise is milk.

Professor Dave Charlton described the restarting of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN as a 'new era for science.' He was interviewed by *The Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *Mirror.co.uk* and the *Scottish Daily Express*.

A collection of photographs from the 1950–60s were uncovered in the University's archives and were published in the *Birmingham Post*.

Dr Richard Butler was interviewed by the *Daily Telegraph* about the discovery of a prehistoric salamander, which was one of the top predators before the evolution of the dinosaurs. The story was picked up in *The Mirror*, *Sky News*, *Daily Mail Online* and internationally via *Le Monde* (France), Fox News (USA), the Discovery Channel (USA) and *Alvorada* (Portugal).

Professor Rob MacKenzie appeared on BBC One's *Countryfile* discussing his research into woodland responses to changing atmospheric conditions.

feeling social...



This year's Easter conversion activity more than tripled the number of individual feedback received in 2014 from prospective students across Twitter and Instagram.

All University of Birmingham offer holders were sent personalised posters and encouraged to share these on social media. In addition to students sharing pictures of their posters we were able to see how excited students were about coming to Birmingham. Key phrases from students sharing their posters included 'Excited' and 'Can't wait', and posters were photographed hanging next to revision and on fridges as motivation to 'get to Birmingham'.

During the campaign there were hundreds of posts on Twitter with #hellobrum building an excitement about Birmingham for prospective students.

The University is using the Tumblr platform to share academic comment on trending news stories, research and current affairs in an easily digestible format. Find out more at: <http://unibirmingham.tumblr.com>.

Professor Anthony Barnett was featured in an article on the *Daily Mail Online* discussing Metformin, a treatment for Type 2 diabetes.

Dr Nando Sigona was interviewed by BBC Radio 4's *The World at One* about the European ten-point plan to respond to the number of deaths at sea as migrants attempt to cross the Mediterranean.

Join the JoB online community

Follow us on Twitter at [@unibirmingham](https://twitter.com/unibirmingham).

If you use social media at work and would like to increase your visibility, find out more at:

intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/socialmediaguidelines

If you would like to work with the press office, or find out more about how they can help you promote your research, email pressoffice@contacts.bham.ac.uk or call 0121 414 6029.

You can also find out more at: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/pressoffice>

David Adams ...in my own words

David Adams is Professor of Hepatology, Dean of Medicine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences (MDS). He is also Director of the Birmingham National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Biomedical Research Unit (BRU) for liver disease.



As an alumnus of the University it is a slightly strange feeling to be heading up the Medical School that I once attended but of course it is also very close to my heart. When I first began my studies at Birmingham my intention was to become a GP but in my early years as a junior doctor I became increasingly drawn to the research side of medicine.

In the late 1980s I worked on the Birmingham Liver Transplant Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and this stimulated my interest in liver disease and immunology. It was here that my laboratory career took off as I tried to understand the mechanisms that lead to liver transplants being rejected by white blood cells recruited to the transplant from the blood. After completing my clinical training I went as a Postdoctoral Fellow to the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA. Here I investigated how white blood cells are transported around the body via the blood and the signals that determine where and when they enter tissues to fight infections (or if things go wrong, drive disease).

By the mid-1990s I was back in Birmingham applying what I had learnt in the USA to understanding the mechanisms that drive liver inflammation, and cirrhosis in response to liver injury. Following two decades of research we have reached a point where we are translating our understanding of the molecular process in the laboratory into clinical trials in patients with liver disease. This has been made possible by a funding award from NIHR for the BRU in 2008 to support a team of clinicians, scientists and nurses dedicated to the safe delivery of clinical trials of novel treatments for a range of liver diseases. The BRU has recently seen exciting results on pioneering treatments for fatty liver disease, which is linked to obesity and diabetes and now the most common cause of liver disease. We are also testing new treatments for autoimmune liver disease – where a patient's immune system turns against the liver – and hepatitis C infection. Our new approaches to treatment include stem cell therapy to repair liver damage before it becomes irreversible and immune cell therapy in which we stimulate the body's immune system to destroy liver cancer, a deadly complication of liver disease.

MDS is working with the other colleges, particularly the College of Life and Environmental Sciences (LES),

to deliver the University's Institutional Life Sciences Strategy. To do this we will focus our research into areas where we can demonstrate excellence and work closely with colleagues within the University, the National Health Service (NHS), and industry to address major health issues such as obesity, cancer, inflammatory disorders, antibiotic resistance and infectious diseases.

We also want the University to be at the heart of the city's and the region's life sciences agenda. The University has formed a strategic alliance with University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to create Birmingham Health Partners (BHP). BHP supports a coordinated research agenda in which discoveries are taken from the laboratory through to the clinic to improve patient care and well-being. A direct manifestation of this alliance is the Institute of Translational Medicine (ITM), opening later this year funded by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with matching funding from BHP. The ITM will utilise pioneering science to transform the delivery of health care and drive the local economy. The University is incredibly grateful to various benefactors who continue to donate significant funds to help get the ITM up and running. The University will also be working with Birmingham City Council on the Life Sciences Campus development at Battery Park, Selly Oak. The Campus will bring together research facilities and industry to forge a strong collaboration between academia and business in the region.

While focusing on the quality of research we also want to consolidate our teaching strengths. The College was recently listed as 7th among UK medical schools in the *Complete University Guide 2015*, which is a solid foundation to build on. By achieving the highest standards of teaching across the College we will produce the outstanding doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists and biomedical scientists of the future.

Away from medicine the most important thing is spending time with my family. I also enjoy reading, music and sport, and can often be found unwinding at the riverside fly-fishing. I am a lifelong Nottingham Forest FC supporter but having brought up two sons in Birmingham I also follow one of the city's teams with a keen interest. I'll leave you to guess which one...]