



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

# bulletin\*

WINTER 2020

STAFF MAGAZINE



## Celebrate our community

We showcase the people behind the staff support networks

### The Visitor Centre

Find out what the team can help you with

### Go globetrotting

Sharing experiences of the Go Abroad scheme

### A helping hand

How the University can support you

### Spot the difference

Win a place on a short course

# Welcome to the winter edition of your staff magazine. Our cover star this issue is Dr Michael Ramsammy, one of the volunteers for our important staff communities. We celebrate the people that make up the various staff support networks on pages 16 to 18.

Our Visitor Centre has long stocked an assorted selection of branded merchandise, but they also offer other services. We spoke to the management team to find out how they can help teams across the University. Read more on pages 8 and 9.

The University's Go Abroad scheme is an amazing opportunity for our staff to travel across the globe for professional and academic development. On pages 10 to 13 we invited staff to tell us about their globetrotting experiences.

The period after the festive season can be a difficult time to navigate. Read about all the support options the University offers on pages 14 and 15. Plus, read our nine-to-five feature with Neil Allison on page 19, and don't forget to try our competition on page 20 for the chance to win a great prize.

If you would like to submit ideas or feedback to *bulletin*, please contact us at [bulletin@ed.ac.uk](mailto:bulletin@ed.ac.uk) or +44 (0)131 650 6508.

For regular updates, visit Staff News at [www.ed.ac.uk/news/staff](http://www.ed.ac.uk/news/staff) and follow us on Twitter @EdinUniStaff

Published by Communications and Marketing

Printed by J Thomson Colour Printers

This publication is available in alternative formats on request. Please contact [communications.office@ed.ac.uk](mailto:communications.office@ed.ac.uk)

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Cover image: Sam Sills

## Dates for your diary



### February

**LGBT+ History Month.** Look out for a whole range of events organised by the PrideSoc Student Network and the Staff Pride Network to celebrate LGBT+ history and culture.

### Open until 29 February

**Touching Stitches exhibition (pictured) at the University Main Library.** A collection of once-neglected embroidery is displayed in a celebration of needlework.

### 17 to 21 February

**Flexible Learning Week.**

### 24 February to 8 March

**Fairtrade Fortnight.** The Social Responsibility and Sustainability team have organised events across the University to show support for the Fairtrade movement.

### 29 February to 9 May

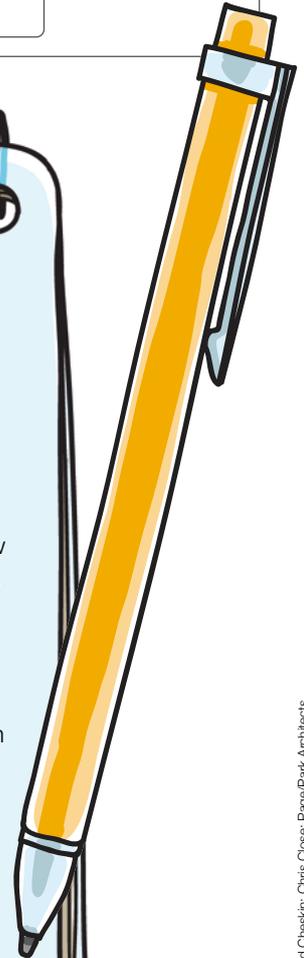
**Pine's Eye at the Talbot Rice Gallery.** A fascinating exhibition that explores what it means to be human in times of ecological change.

### 16 March

**Nominations close for the Students' Association's Teaching Awards.** The results will be celebrated in April.

### 3 April

**Teaching block 4 ends.**



gmm2000/Getty Images; David Cheskin; Chris Close; PaperPark Architects

# A new decade

by Professor Peter Mathieson, *Principal and Vice-Chancellor*

January 2020 not only brings the start of a new year, but the start of a new decade. The excitement and anticipation of a new year never fails to stimulate thoughts of opportunities to come.



Our aims for the next 10 years are outlined in *Strategy 2030*. Our values-based, people-focused priorities underpin the University's contributions to excellence in research, teaching, knowledge exchange and civic engagement for our future. We continue to be a highly significant organisation locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, a magnet for talent from all over the world and a professionally responsible driver of personal and societal transformation. We will build on our efforts to make the University accessible to all, irrespective of background, and a community where everyone can flourish. I encourage you all to engage with the strategy and play your part in helping to achieve our objectives. In particular, the upcoming University Court and Senate elections provide an excellent opportunity to play your part. Staff are able to self-nominate this year and voting opens in the spring.



Artist's impression of the Health and Wellbeing Centre.

We will build on our efforts to make the University accessible to all.

In our pledge to support and value our community, it's important that we address the disquiet of the past few months. I would like to thank everyone who has helped to minimise disruption to learning and teaching during the recent industrial action. I was also reassured by the respectful nature in which the majority of pickets were conducted.

We have a duty of care to all staff to ensure that financially sustainable solutions on both pensions and pay are

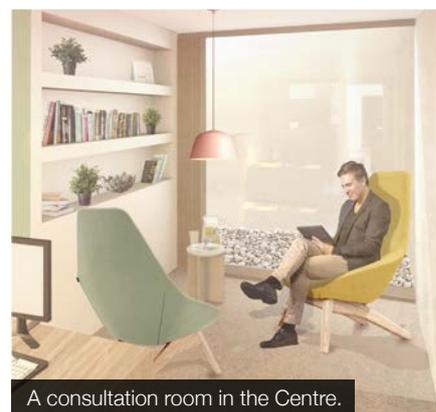
reached and this is true for the whole sector. We continue to hope there will be early resolutions to both the USS and national pay disputes and are actively engaging to this effect with the sector-wide organisations leading both of these negotiations.

On an optimistic note, we look forward to the opening of the Health and Wellbeing Centre this spring. This new hub will provide a welcoming space for all and is another positive step towards caring for our University community.

This is just the latest example of investing in our people and in our future. Thank you all for everything that you do to enhance the experience of everyone connected with the University. The new decade will bring varied opportunities and challenges; I am very confident that the future of this fabulous ancient university is very bright indeed.



The lounge in the Centre.



A consultation room in the Centre.

# Need to know *The vital University updates you should know about.*

## 1. Brexit plans

The UK is scheduled to leave the European Union on 31 January 2020. The University and Europe webpages have information for both staff and their family members who are EU citizens, and these will be regularly updated as the Brexit negotiations continue.

 [edin.ac/europe](http://edin.ac/europe)

## 2. Service Excellence roadmaps for 2020

Upcoming changes and improvements in the Service Excellence projects have all been collated into a new simple plan. It shows the key things coming up in your area so you know exactly what to look out for. The roadmap will be updated each month.

 [edin.ac/sep-roadmap](http://edin.ac/sep-roadmap)

## 3. Student support and personal tutor review

An evolved model for supporting students, which is built on four key pillars, has been approved in principle by governing groups. The team is now working on a business case for the governance groups to approve in early 2020.

 [edin.ac/personal-tutor-review](http://edin.ac/personal-tutor-review)

## New staff rewards

A new and improved staff rewards site is now live. The user-friendly SharePoint page gives you access to a wide range of staff discounts from external providers as well as benefits offered by the University. Discounts range from days out to food and drink, from retail shopping to travel and accommodation. It's also possible for staff to purchase an NUS TOTEM card with access to a huge selection of discounts.

You can also find pay- and reward-related information including childcare, policies and forms. The news section is updated regularly with new benefits and offers. If you know of any great deals or have any suggestions, let the reward team know at [reward@ed.ac.uk](mailto:reward@ed.ac.uk)

 [edin.ac/staff-rewards](http://edin.ac/staff-rewards)

The total score achieved by our men's and women's rugby teams in the annual Royal Bank of Scotland Scottish Varsity against the University of St Andrews in September. Huge congratulations to both teams.



## Payroll Giving

As a University of Edinburgh employee, you can give to any registered UK charity through your pay. Payroll Giving is a simple, tax-efficient way of donating to the cause you care about most.

As the University is a registered charity, you may even decide to give to one of the great causes here. For example, you can support our research into Motor Neurone Disease, help provide life-saving equipment and the best care for animal patients at our Hospital for Small Animals or support scholarships for students from the lowest income families so they can study here.

 To donate through your pay, complete the online form at [www.ed.givingonline.org.uk](http://www.ed.givingonline.org.uk)

# Improving the staff experience



**Sarah Smith**, who is Vice-Principal Strategic Change and Governance, tells us more about her work on the staff experience at Edinburgh.



"I would like to thank everyone who has already contributed to discussions around improving our staff experience.

"We have recently set up a new Staff Experience Committee, which I am convening. This involves colleagues from all three Colleges and Professional Services Groups and will shape and lead cross-University priorities on staff experience going forward. Initial plans include focused work on staff performance (by which we mean how to provide the environment and support for everyone to achieve their potential as well as ensure that poor performance is identified and handled appropriately); and on communications and engagement.

"Much progress has been made but there is still a lot to do. I look forward to working with you to build on the clear people-focus of our new strategy and to make the University of Edinburgh an even better place to work."



## The World's Big Sleep Out

Well done to all our staff and students who gathered to take part in The World's Big Sleep Out in December. The charity event encourages people to sleep outside to raise money to tackle homelessness. Staff, students and members of the public spent the night in Princes Street Gardens, one of 50 locations in cities around the world that hosted the event. Despite the rain, the evening was a huge success. Pictured is actor Gregor Fisher who read the volunteers a bedtime story.

## To do list



### Try: The new Eleiko Training Gym

A new space, the first Eleiko Training Gym at any UK higher education facility, offers Sport & Exercise members access to a new and improved range of premium Eleiko weights and additional multifunctional platform space.

### Celebrate: The Principal's Medals

Congratulations to the recipients of the Principal's Medals 2019. Dr Adam Budd, Lecturer in the School of History, Classics & Archaeology was awarded the Contribution to the Community Medal while Harry Campbell, Professor of Genetic Epidemiology and Public Health, Igor Rudan, Professor of International Health and Molecular Medicine, and Harish Nair, Professor of Paediatric Infectious Diseases and Global Health, all in the Usher Institute, were awarded the Exceptional Service Medal.



### Listen: Sharing things

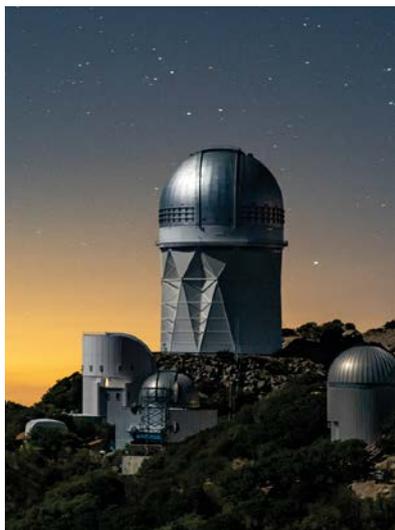
A new podcast launched by the Alumni Relations team captures conversations between students, staff and graduates; the one thing they have in common is Edinburgh. Each guest brings along a special, treasured or significant item to start the conversation. What happens next is sometimes funny, sometimes moving and always unexpected.

### Investigate: KB100

In 2020 the King's Buildings celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Look out for lots of events to celebrate this incredible milestone later this year.

# research in focus

## New telescope to map the universe



Professor John Peacock is leading a team in Edinburgh's Institute for Astronomy, in collaboration with more than 500 researchers from across the world, to produce the most detailed survey of the universe ever undertaken. A new telescope, the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI), will map the distance to other galaxies and stars to measure how much the universe is expanding. The telescope contains 5,000 mini-robots, each measuring the light of far-away galaxies and is fixed to the top of the Mayall Telescope in Arizona.

Over the next five years, the telescope will measure the distance between us and 35 million galaxies to measure how much the universe is expanding. The researchers are hoping it will reveal more about dark energy, the mysterious force behind this fast growth. DESI will also teach us more about quasars, which will allow scientists to look into the universe's past.



**Abrisham Ahmadzadeh**, Gender and Sexuality Communications Intern in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, tells us about her work on *Dangerous Women*.

"Dangerous Women has been a whirlwind of a project, from start to finish, even more so considering I have only been involved in its final legacy. An anthology of 50 pieces written by 52 amazing women from all around the world, *Dangerous Women* answers the question, "what does it mean to be a dangerous woman?" through poems, essays, short stories, comics and more. Our authors include activists, playwrights, academics, artists, students and staff at the University, and all have voices that deserve to be heard.

"In keeping with giving voice to those previously unheard, we are bringing this book to print with Unbound, a publishing house based on crowdfunding. Our book cannot exist until enough people pledge

for it, by buying a book and supporting the creative process. Without our community, we can't raise up the women around us.

"As a final-year student in classical studies, I came to this through the EmployED summer internship scheme, having just returned from a year abroad on the Erasmus programme in Sweden. With the hope of settling back into Edinburgh while also earning some money, I never imagined that I'd be sat here, six months on, with my name to be published on the cover of a book. The best part? All my friends, family and colleagues get to have their name in the book too! Each pledge level comes with a reward such as a limited edition mug or tote bag, and every contributor gets their name in the back of the book. Please pledge now to make this book a reality, and put *Dangerous Women: Fifty Reflections on Women, Power and Identity* on the University of Edinburgh map!"

[www.unbound.com/books/dangerous-women](http://www.unbound.com/books/dangerous-women)

## Ovarian cancer trial success

A team of researchers at the University's Nicola Murray Centre for Ovarian Cancer Research, in collaboration with the University of Texas' MD Anderson Cancer Centre, has found a drug that could help to improve ovarian cancer treatment.

In a trial of 260 patients, some were randomly assigned trametinib which has been previously used to treat melanoma. The patients that received this showed a more than double chance of progression-free survival, and the percentage of people whose tumour shrank was more than four times higher compared to those who received standard care treatment.

# teaching in focus

Stories based on posts from the Teaching Matters Blog. Read more at [www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk](http://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk)

## Get involved

Practice Worth Sharing (PWS) is a new initiative that encourages more discussions and collaboration around teaching-related practices. Based at the Moray House School of Education and Sport, the fortnightly, 30-minute sessions are open to everyone in the University to come and share their stories of learning and teaching across all disciplines.

In 2019 PWS saw conversations around mental health and education, reflective learning, and participation in large lectures. Organisers Dr Paul Kelly, Lecturer in Physical Activity for Health, and Dr Deborah Holt, Bicentennial Fellow, both in Moray House School of Education and Sport, are happy to take suggestions for future topics or and questions around the PWS initiative.

## Have you thought about... teaching-led research?



**Dr Geoffrey Bromiley** is a Reader in *Experimental Geoscience in the School of GeoSciences*.

“While research-led teaching is something we are keen to promote we don’t often hear about teaching-led research. During my 10 years at Edinburgh I’ve grown to realise that teaching is a two-way flow of information. Good teaching is dialogue. At Edinburgh, we have gifted students from all over the world who ask tricky questions. They raise points that you would never have considered, and make connections between subjects that can be both surprising and enlightening.

“Every year we take our fourth-year geology students to Cyprus. At one point we make a detour near the village of Marki to look at a small volcanic mound known (to us at least) as Picrite Hill. Our students spend time clambering around, making observations and trying

to understand how it formed. It’s a geo-puzzle which is ultimately explained by crystal ‘mush’ being squeezed like toothpaste onto the ancient seafloor. During the discussion we had last year one of our students asked an interesting question: “Does the same process explain how volcanoes form in other places on Earth, or on other planets?” That got us thinking and the discussion we had ultimately resulted in a paper we’ve just published. The unusual set of circumstances which formed Picrite Hill are probably not that unusual on other planets, and what we observe at Picrite Hill might explain a puzzling type of volcano found on Venus. A nice example of how teaching can lead research. A pleasant chat with geology students in the Cypriot sun last April, while perched on a small lumpy hill, might have answered a question that planetary scientists have been pondering for decades.”

## A student perspective: joint honours programmes

**Isabelle Sher** is a second-year joint honours student studying *English literature and history*.

“From the outset of my studies I assumed that, as a joint honours student, I would be studying both disciplines in equal measure. However, as my first year progressed, I found myself asking what it meant to give equal time to both degree disciplines when the courses were structured so differently? And more importantly perhaps, why did the expectations of each School contrast so dramatically from one another?”

“For the majority of the year, I was pleased with the course content and the way in which the two degrees slotted together. But if I was to describe the structure of my degree in the barest terms possible, I would say it felt like a single honours in English literature with additional history courses. A few steps could be taken to address this inconsistency.

“Schools could provide the option to have a tutor in either subject from the outset, and perhaps the option to switch for

second year if students sense they would like to head in that subject area, rather than assigning them to a School without consulting them.

“Schools could start a conversation about how they might facilitate collaboration between joint honours subjects for the dissertation. Sure, it would make things a little trickier, but imagine the value and insight that could be gained.

“They could also design a document highlighting the key ways courses are structured in each department throughout the years of the course. An example would be that in Years 1 and 2 for history, *The Historian’s Toolkit* and *Historiography* are compulsory courses. Years 1 and 2 for English are one prescribed course (rather than individual modules). Both options are great, but it is confusing.

“Having said all this, I do feel a joint honours is a real opportunity for students to gain a greater understanding of where their academic passion really lies.”

# Spotlight on: the **Visitor Centre**



Found in the heart of our Central Area, the Visitor Centre is so much more than a gift shop.



Whether it's ordering bespoke merchandise or stocking up on the latest copy of *bulletin*, the Visitor Centre does so much more than sell branded mugs.

The Visitor Centre staff can help with any questions about the University and surrounding area. They've got a whole range of publications they can share, from campus maps to *Edit* magazine, as well as copies of *Strategy 2030* which are all free for you to pick up.

The Centre sells a range of official University merchandise from classic hoodies and sweatshirts, to beautifully crafted tartan and tweed items. Sustainability is at the heart of everything they do, so ensuring the clothing is ethical, eco-friendly and of the highest quality is vital. They actively participate in the University's sustainability network and were awarded a Silver Sustainability Award in 2019. They also support local small businesses and artists by stocking their work; many of them are graduates.

**Gordon Chalmers** (pictured far left)

Gordon leads the daily operations of the Visitor Centre. He also develops and manages licensing and partnership agreements for University-branded merchandise. The Centre is often the first point of contact for visitors and applicants to the University so being able to deliver the best possible service to them is vital. Gordon is always looking to work closely with colleagues across the University to help the Centre do this, so please get in touch if he can help with advertising an event or opportunity for you.

 [gordon.chalmers@ed.ac.uk](mailto:gordon.chalmers@ed.ac.uk)

**Ross Christie** (pictured left)

Ross looks after the digital presence of the Visitor Centre and Gift Shop including the online shop, social media and digital marketing. He also manages the non-clothing merchandise in the store as well as leading on design across the entire range. Ross is a sustainability champion for the University and can provide insight and support for teams looking for sustainable options for their merchandise needs.

 [ross.christie@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ross.christie@ed.ac.uk)

**Victoria Ball**

Victoria, an Edinburgh College of Art alumna, manages the bespoke merchandise orders for all Schools and teams across the University. Get in touch with Victoria if you are looking to produce bespoke merchandise for your team, or for an event or giveaway coming up. Whether this is small items from our shop stock, to 15,000 hoodies, Victoria will ensure that the brand guidelines are followed, and merchandise is sourced through approved framework suppliers.

 [victoria.ball@ed.ac.uk](mailto:victoria.ball@ed.ac.uk)



Team favourites



Leather card holder, £25

Old College pin badge, £5



Tartan lambswool scarf, £25



Roberta Fox buildings T-shirt, £17.50

rCup, £11



Where to find them

Website: [edin.ac/visitor-centre](http://edin.ac/visitor-centre)

Giftshop: [www.giftshop.ed.ac.uk](http://www.giftshop.ed.ac.uk)

Email: [communications.office@ed.ac.uk](mailto:communications.office@ed.ac.uk)

Instagram: @UofEshop



## The University's Go Abroad scheme allows staff members to travel all over the world for academic and professional development.

Last year the Study and Work Away Service sent 237 staff members to 37 countries. From Czechia to China, and Scandinavia to South America, there are now more than 40 countries to choose from across the world. It's simple to apply and all staff members with an active University contract are eligible for Erasmus+ funding (but not those whose contract is with a subsidiary of the University), with spaces available throughout the year. Still not convinced? We've collected staff experiences to show the huge benefits, both personal and professional, to be gained from going abroad.

 [edin.ac/go-abroad-staff](http://edin.ac/go-abroad-staff)



## Constructive conversations

Last year, I, alongside colleagues and PhD students, co-organised and took part in a three-day workshop in Lisbon, at the Institute for Social Science on the sociology of food.

The three days were intense yet relaxed and enjoyable. The two joint dinners were moments of freer exchange and appreciative commentary on the local food... Some cities are just more conducive to conversation than others, and Lisbon is certainly one of them (despite rather high acoustic contamination)!

**Dr Isabelle Darmon**

*Lecturer in Sociology and Sustainable Development in the School of Social & Political Sciences*

## A taste of Singapore

I went on a training visit to Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore under the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility scheme. Job shadowing and meeting with my counterparts over there not only provided me with an excellent opportunity to share best practice and make contacts, but I was also able to gain a better understanding of the cultural differences within the workplace. NTU could not have been more welcoming, and they put together a full programme of activity for the week. I felt so flattered that they had gone to this much effort for little old me! I also had plenty of time to explore the city and found out so much about Singapore's interesting history and culture – as well as their local cuisine!

**Claire Edminson**

*Senior Administrator in Edinburgh Global*



## Let's get digital

I was delighted to be able to participate in the fourth International Staff Week at the Biblioteki Politechniki Gdańskiej this year. We visited five libraries, each with interesting ideas to take away and a rich history to explore. For me the highlight was a behind the scenes tour of the Special Collections to see some of the treasures they hold and how the digitisation team at the Pomeranian Digital Library are making these wonderful collections more accessible.

My favourite presentation from the week was on citizen science – an interesting history of how crowd-sourcing science developed. Who knew that Napoleon Bonaparte solved the problem of supplying food to the troops by offering a 12,000 FRK reward contest for the best food preservation, leading to the tinned food we know today?

**Susan Pettigrew**

*Senior Photographer in  
Library and University Collections*

## Breathtaking buildings

I visited Stockholm University for an international workshop on the theory and description of pluricentric languages.

Visiting Sweden for the first time in my life, I have to admit that one of the highlights of my stay was having lunch in the departmental staff room. I felt transported to a toy university in a toy world surrounded by bright spaces, wooden furniture, simple lines, and lots of colours everywhere. I learnt then that these buildings at the Frescati Campus were designed by famous architects such as Ralph Erskine and Gunnar Asplund.

**Dr Carlos Soler Montes**

*Lecturer in Spanish in the School of  
Literatures, Languages & Cultures*

## Stumbling on Santa

I had the privilege of going on an exchange to Vancouver where I spent one week with the Gift and Estate Planning team at the University of British Columbia (UBC). North America is known for its wealth of fundraising experience, planned giving included, and I knew that this was the place to go if I want to learn more.

On my last day, I joined more than 200 fundraising and alumni-relations professionals from UBC at their very own conference. The University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Santa J Ono, also attended. He has his own newsletter called 'Letter from Santa' – brilliant, I thought.

**Kristina Benova**

*Legacy and Grants Coordinator in  
Development and Alumni*

## When in Cologne

I attended a staff training week organised by the University of Cologne, in Germany. It was on the theme of HR staff development and was the first time that the University of Cologne hosted a staff training week. There were 18 different nationalities in attendance, ranging from Finland to Bulgaria, so this made the experience unique! Across the week, we all presented to each other on our university's staff development opportunities and engaged in some job shadowing with HR professionals from the University of Cologne itself. The programme was jam packed with relevant learning and sharing opportunities. I learnt so much in a week, made so many new friends, and got to explore a great city so I would highly recommend a trip to all.

**Lilly Jenkins**

*Programme Office Manager in  
the DDI Programme Office*

*Continued overleaf*



## Out of this world

I was among 23 people from 13 countries, mostly from across Europe but also including Argentina, Brazil, China and Kazakhstan, who attended International Mobility Week at the University of Silesia in Katowice last summer. As the week began, I made my way to the meeting point by the spectacular space-age Spodek stadium in the centre of Katowice, which looks like a flying saucer. Standing in a circle in glorious weather we introduced ourselves, before heading off to a nearby restaurant for a sumptuous meal of Polish cuisine and further conversation and networking in a convivial atmosphere. It was ideal preparation for the week that largely focused on an exchange of ideas, experience and good practice for meeting the needs of international students.

**Dr Mark Newman**

*Reader in History in the School of  
History, Classics & Archaeology*

## Free to Rome

I was fortunate enough to spend a week job shadowing the Special Events and Protocol Office at Sapienza University of Rome.

During the visit I assisted with an Engineering Symposium Opening Concert in the beautiful cloister of San Pietro in Vincoli, home to the statue of Moses by Michelangelo. The last day of my trip coincided with European Make Music Day therefore I helped with the event preparation for an evening jazz orchestra concert within the Sapienza University Chapel.

For me, Go Abroad was an incredible experience to share event planning expertise with another institution and helped build my confidence in an international environment – not to mention the opportunity to sample some of the delicious pizza and gelato Rome has to offer.

**Rebecca Whitefield**

*Events and Protocol Assistant  
in Events and Protocol*

## Igniting inspiration

In July this year I attended the Library Staff Week run by the University of Reims Champagne Ardenne (URCA) in France. The URCA team took a totally different approach to the way we run our own equivalent staff week. In many ways, their approach offered a more genuine exchange of ideas than our model so we may well incorporate elements of this into our own programme.

The week was not without incident, however, with my own apartment block having to be evacuated after someone set their room on fire. It was also the only work trip I've ever made where I've been asked for an autograph!

**Norman Rodger**

*Projects Development Manager in  
Library and University Collections*

## Turkish delight

I undertook three Erasmus+ teaching exchanges in three years. Each asked something different of me, and each offered something different in return.

My latest experience was a week teaching at a relatively new university in Turkey; MEF in Istanbul. This pushed me in fresh directions: teaching English for law students; lecturing in different areas; and even lecturing in Turkish – but just for 10 minutes.

**Dr Andy Aydın-Aitchison**

*Senior Lecturer in Criminology  
in the Edinburgh Law School*



## Hot desking

In July this year I was lucky enough to visit the Catholic University of Chile in Santiago thanks to Go Abroad and the Erasmus+ programme. I did a week of job shadowing within a very similar department to Development and Alumni with the aim of learning how the top university in Latin America builds on their communications strategy for their stakeholders. Everyone made me feel very welcome from the first day and treated me as a member of their team. They provided me with a desk and a computer to work from during the week and an agenda full of activities, conferences and meetings with other key departments at the University.

**Sara Mediavilla**

*Philanthropy Assistant, Legacies and Grants  
in Development and Alumni*

## Night at a museum

I took part in an Erasmus Week at Riga Stradins University in Latvia. The focus of the week was internationalisation in higher education which attracted 80 participants from all over Europe. As the only professional from a UK university, it was brilliant to gather such diverse regional perspectives on the topic. I particularly enjoyed the sessions about how to manage the impact of geopolitical factors outside our control. The University was a great host and organised many fun activities after hours, including dinner at the Latvian National Museum of Art and a visit to Rundale Palace. These more relaxed events were a great backdrop for sharing cultures, languages and thoughts and I'm still in touch with some participants I met that week.

**Stella Sibbit-Johnston**  
*Student Recruitment Manager in  
the Edinburgh Business School*

## World class

Visiting the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) in Brazil allowed me to try out my research ideas revolving around world literature in a new cultural and academic context.

I left Brazil not only with a fresh perspective on my research, but also with some new ideas for my teaching at Edinburgh, especially my MSc option World Literature, which regularly attracts students from Brazil and South America. The international academic experience I gained at USP has really left an impact on the way I perceive, and wish to develop, my research and teaching beyond national, cultural and institutional borders.

**Dr Frauke Matthes**  
*Senior Lecturer in German in  
the School of Literatures,  
Languages & Cultures*

## Walking on water

In April I travelled to northern Finland to visit Oulu University of Applied Sciences (OAMK) for their international staff exchange week. They are well established in delivering online distance learning and I've already borrowed a few ideas for providing remote library support and embedded information literacy for online students.

The week's programme was arranged by OAMK library staff and involved visiting libraries at the different campuses, sharing practice through presentations and discussions with colleagues – including a walking meeting between two campuses in the snow through Oulu's most picturesque neighbourhood Karjasilta. We also joined other visiting staff and academics for the general programme, which included a crash-course in the notoriously difficult Finnish language. The social programme at Oulu also involved one of the most thrilling experiences I've had – walking out from the beach onto the frozen Baltic Sea.

**Ruth Jenkins**  
*Academic Support Librarian  
(Medicine & Biomedical Sciences)  
in the Information Services Group*

# A helping hand



freely/Getty Images

The start of the new year can be a difficult time for many people. It's normal to feel overwhelmed about the year ahead. There are lots of services within the University to support you whatever you're struggling with.

### Feeling... stressed?

Coming back to work after a long break can be difficult and it doesn't take much to begin to feel stressed. While in the short term, it's possible to harness your feelings of stress to motivate you, prolonged stress can lead to ill health. Staff who would like help with feelings of distress, or other health and mental wellbeing issues that are affecting their work, can find information and advice on the occupational health website.

 [edin.ac/stress](https://edin.ac/stress)

### Feeling... down?

Many people find themselves feeling deflated after the festive break and while some find it easy to get back in to the swing of things, for others it can be a challenge. If you are feeling low and find that your mood doesn't improve then you may find it helpful to talk to someone. The Staff Counselling Service can provide support for both personal and work-related issues.

 [edin.ac/staff-counselling](https://edin.ac/staff-counselling)

### Worrying about... money?

December is an expensive month, no matter what your holiday plans. The University has a financial wellbeing employee benefit provider, Salary Finance, that provides access to affordable loans you can repay from your salary, as well as a range of tips, tools and videos to help you understand your personal finances.\*

The University is also a member of the First Scottish University Credit Union, which allows its members to apply for loans.

 [edin.ac/salary-finance](https://edin.ac/salary-finance)

### Feeling... overwhelmed?

To say that there's a lot going on in January is an understatement. Often, we can feel that everything is getting on top of us a bit. For anyone who needs support with their concerns or anxieties, or if you just want a purposeful conversation, the Chaplaincy runs the University Listening Service. Conversations can be held in a variety of places, even over a walk or a coffee and the service is available daily from Monday to Friday.

 [edin.ac/listening-service](https://edin.ac/listening-service)

### Worrying about... your mental health?

It's important to recognise your mental wellbeing, and prioritise looking after your mental health. An easy way to understand how you're feeling is through practising mindfulness. The Chaplaincy offers free lunchtime drop-ins across the three campuses which include a guided mindfulness practice with Dr Kitty Wheeler, the Mindfulness Chaplain, and time afterwards for reflection and discussion. These sessions are open to both beginners and those with a little more experience.

 [edin.ac/mindfulness-drop-ins](https://edin.ac/mindfulness-drop-ins)

### Worrying about... your fitness?

Don't feel guilty about your festive treats – you deserve them! It's understandable that you might want to get more active after a sedentary couple of weeks. Both the Chaplaincy and Sport & Exercise offer a range of free programmes to help get you moving. Free Hatha Yoga and Capacitar Tai Chi sessions are available at the Bristo Square Chaplaincy. But if you want something to get your heart rate up a bit more, Sport & Exercise offer Support for Physical Activity – a free, one-to-one service that helps you become more active.

 [edin.ac/active-lives](https://edin.ac/active-lives)

## Online self help

### Big White Wall

An online network that provides round the clock support for staff and students. Make use of community, group and one-to-one support while professionally trained wall guides make sure all members are safe and anonymous.

 [edin.ac/big-white-wall-staff](https://edin.ac/big-white-wall-staff)

### Feeling Good App

A free app for all staff, it helps deal with day-to-day stressful situations, reducing stress, depression and anxiety.

 [edin.ac/feeling-good-app](https://edin.ac/feeling-good-app)

### #LetsTalk

The Let's Talk podcast brings together members of the University community to discuss important mental health issues.

 [edin.ac/lets-talk](https://edin.ac/lets-talk)

### SilverCloud

Free access to interactive programmes based around cognitive behavioural therapy. The courses focus on anxiety, depression, stress and positive body image.

 [edin.ac/what-silvercloud](https://edin.ac/what-silvercloud)

### University websites

The staff wellbeing, Chaplaincy and staff counselling websites all have easy-to-access information about all the services they offer, as well as extensive suggestions for help you can find outside of the University.

\*This is an option, not a recommendation. The University of Edinburgh does not benefit from offering this service and all your communications will be with Salary Finance. This content is for guidance and educational purposes only and is generic in nature. Salary Finance does not offer regulated financial advice. Please seek independent financial advice. Applications will be assessed to ensure the loan is appropriate and affordable for you. References to 'Salary Finance' means Salary Finance Limited (acting as credit broker and servicer) and each of its associated and/or group companies, including Salary Finance Loans Limited (acting as lender).

# Celebrate our community



Dr Sahan Mendis, Clinical Research Fellow in the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, is a member of the Race Equality Network.

The University includes thousands of amazing and diverse individuals. It's these people that make Edinburgh such an incredible place to work and it's important to provide everyone with the support they need.

Several staff networks are in place to ensure that everyone feels welcome and safe. The Staff Pride Network, the Disabled Staff Network and the Race Equality Network are open to all and provide a system of support as well as a collective voice for all their members. Here we recognise some of the people that make up these vital networks.

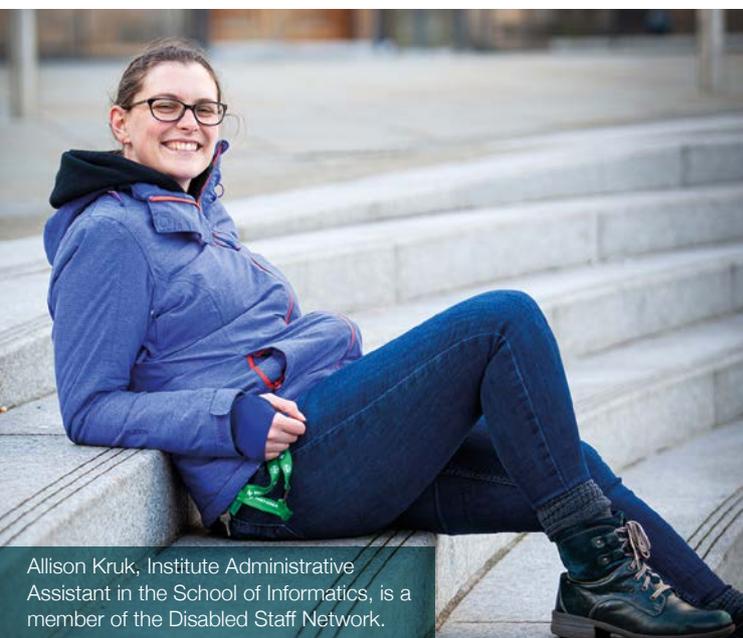
 [edin.ac/staff-networks](http://edin.ac/staff-networks)



Kristina Tamane, Space Business Development Executive in the School of GeoSciences, is a member of the Disabled Staff Network.



Catherine Gilliland, Business Support Coordinator (Small Projects and Minor Works) in Estates, is Convener of the Disabled Staff Network.



Allison Kruk, Institute Administrative Assistant in the School of Informatics, is a member of the Disabled Staff Network.



Jonathan MacBride, IGS Administrative Assistant in the School of Informatics, is Co-chair of the Staff Pride Network and a member of the Disabled Staff Network.

Continued overleaf

Cathy Naughton, Centre for Data, Culture & Society Administrator in the College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, is a member of the Staff Pride Network.



Dr Emily Sena, Stroke Association Kirby Laing Foundation Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, is Convener of the Race Equality Network.



Stobhan Carroll, CDT Administrator – Data Science in the School of Informatics, is a committee member of the Disabled Staff Network and a volunteer for the Staff Pride Network.



Dr Michael Ramsammy, Lecturer in Linguistics in the School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences, is a member of the Race Equality Network and the Staff Pride Network.

# my nine-to-five



**Neil Allison is Head of Prospective Student Content – a team created by the Service Excellence Programme to sit in Communications and Marketing. He shares a day in his new role with *bulletin*.**

### **Please explain your job in a nutshell**

I'm leading the establishment of a new team and a new service within Communications and Marketing. We're building the University's capacity to improve the online experience for prospective students.

### **What are your main goals?**

The primary goal is prospective students successfully using the University website to make an informed decision about applying to study with us.



To find out more about the new team and what they do, visit [edin.ac/prospective-student-content](http://edin.ac/prospective-student-content)

I'm setting up this new team to facilitate more joined-up and user-focused website content management practices. We need to deliver new and better services to the University's student recruitment community, who currently manage a lot of website content across a lot of websites.

The most tangible part of what we're setting out to do is to overhaul the web presence to make it leaner and more measurably effective.

### **What projects are you working on at the moment?**

The key priority for us at the moment is to begin to deliver on the plan set out by the Service Excellence Programme. I'm currently liaising with colleagues and reviewing user research with the team to identify which areas need attention first.

The new team will also be inheriting responsibility for the annual cycle of content updates published in the degree finders. We're currently working with the Digital Marketing and Content teams in Communications and Marketing to plan how this switchover happens while continuing the usual service delivery.

### **Who do you deal with week to week?**

It's early days, so I don't have a typical week yet. But it's clear that our key points of liaison are other teams in Communications and Marketing – particularly Digital Marketing, Market

Insights and the School and College Marketing Officers; Website and Communications in Information Services, who lead the EdWeb CMS service; colleagues in central support groups who deliver services to prospective students; Student Recruitment and website management colleagues across the University; and other Service Excellence Project teams.

And, of course, I'm spending a lot of time with my own team as we establish ourselves. Many are new to higher education and it's fair to say there's a bit of a learning curve.

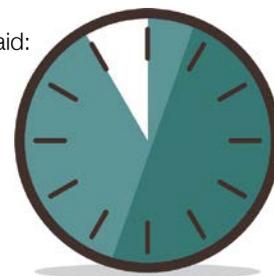
### **Please describe a typical day**

No such thing, thankfully!

### **What is the most satisfying aspect of your job?**

Einstein reputedly said:

"If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions."



I'm not claiming to be Einstein by any stretch, but working with colleagues to better understand and define problems is probably the thing I enjoy the most. That, and setting teams up to solve those problems.

## Get organised...

### **Desk: organised or a beautiful mess?**

My desk is relatively new, so I'm still reasonably organised but it will gradually descend into a beautiful mess. I'm an intermittent clear out kind of person.

### **Routine, or take it as it comes?**

A good routine sets you up to deal with whatever else gets thrown at you.

### **Are you a list person?**

My life is a list.

### **Daily staples?**

Morning and evening routines with my kids. Tea time round the table is the best way to leave work behind.

### **Favourite lunch spots?**

Don't really have one, but hoping that the balcony attached to our new office becomes a favourite. I'm not expecting to find that out until the summer though.

## ...and now relax

### **Favourite pastimes?**

A Saturday morning swim with my kids. Cooking, especially things traditional to north-east England (ask me about my stottie cakes). Playing guitar with friends.

### **Best time of year, and why?**

Not sure. I have reasons to love each of the seasons. Having something to look forward to in the near future is most important, I think.

### **Perfect Sunday afternoon?**

Sunday lunch, a stroll, a couple of pints of nice beer and a snooze. Though I can't remember the last time I did this...

### **Ideal holiday?**

Somewhere with a bit of history and culture; always somewhere new. A bit of sun on your back doesn't go amiss either, though.

# spot the difference



## Win a free place on a short course

**S**pot the difference and win a free place on one of the University's short courses in 2020/21. The University offers short courses in a variety of subject areas including: creative art and design courses, in-depth history courses, immersive language courses and even hands-on science courses. Staff members can receive 10 per cent off all courses with their staff card or UUN. For your chance to win, circle the five differences in the two images on the left and send your entry to us by **Friday 20 March**.

You can post your entry to *bulletin* Competition, Communications and Marketing, 5 Forrest Hill, EH1 2QL or email it to [bulletin@ed.ac.uk](mailto:bulletin@ed.ac.uk). The draw will be made and the winner notified on Monday 23 March. For full terms and conditions visit:

[edin.ac/bulletin-competition](http://edin.ac/bulletin-competition)

🔗 Find out more about short courses at [www.ed.ac.uk/short-courses](http://www.ed.ac.uk/short-courses)

Last issue's prize was won by Diane Reid, Research Support Secretary in the Institute for Bioengineering.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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