

SUMMER '18 | ISSUE 01

RGView

Connecting the University Community

Our World

Our Purpose

Our Expertise

Our Strengths

Our Plan

CHANGE OUR TOMORROW

What does it mean?



Welcome to RGView.

For the last few years we've shared news with you through Nexus and in the spirit of innovation and continuous improvement we decided it was time for a change. So, we've created RGView.

RGView is here to share your news, but also your thoughts and ideas. It will be released quarterly and feature insight from some familiar names and some new faces. We hope you find this first edition both enjoyable and informative.

If you've got any feedback, thoughts, story ideas, or you'd like to submit a letter, please share these with the team by emailing the editor, [Danielle O'Donnell](#), Internal Communications Lead.

RGU Communications Team

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A Word from the Principal

Over the past several months, RGU has been going through an exercise of renewing its strategic framework. Every institution needs a strategy and a sense of where it's going. But it also needs a sense of its own ethos and values.

Devising a university ethos is not something unique, but doing so in a way that specifically speaks to the nature of a particular university is somewhat rarer, and indeed more difficult. Many universities have statements of their values, but these are often entirely interchangeable. They will include 'integrity', 'curiosity', 'collegiality' and similar words. These are all important values to which this university will also always want to subscribe, but they are the values of a wider university system rather than of a particular institution.

Our ethos needs to express something of the profession we are in, but also of the specific intentions that we, as an RGU community, want to put into practice, and which mark us out as the institution we are and what we want to achieve.

Setting our ethos and values is one final, and very important, part of our strategic positioning, and it will help to make real the direct the role we intend to play in the world of higher education. This is a process that needs to engage all members of this university.

Ferdinand von Prondzynski
Principal

NIBlets

A snapshot of the news in brief from across the university community.

If a story captures your interest, click the images to find out more.

For more community news visit the [RGU website](#).



Dr Jenna Ross embarked on an MBA at RGU to turn her passion for science and farming into a business concept. She has now won two prestigious awards, as well as an opportunity to travel the world to gather global data to enhance slug control in the UK.



Figures reveal that RGU is only one of two universities in Scotland with gender parity in its professorial roles. Also includes a case study on Professor Sarah Pedersen.



The Principals of three of Scotland's universities looked at new opportunities for collaborative working during a two-day visit to Orkney.



Students and staff from the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences spent a week delivering lessons to school pupils from across Aberdeen city and shire, teaching them the importance of medicine safety.



RGU is developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to enable people to live healthier lives, manage chronic conditions and live independently at home for longer. The latest research was showcased at DataFest18 Fringe in Inverness.



Talented fashion and textile students from Gray's School of Art have been recognised at the inaugural 'Professional Development Award Scheme'. The scheme was launched by a branch of the historical Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen.



RGU is set to launch a unique new degree aimed at changing the public's perspective of exercise and keeping fit. The new MSc Exercise Health and Wellness Coaching begins in September.

Change our Tomorrow

What is our strategy?

The external higher education landscape has been a driving force of the university's renewed strategy. This external world has been shaped by political uncertainty, such as Brexit, the growth of educational technology, a competitive labour market for graduates, and increasing student ROI - the idea that students now expect more than just a degree throughout their time at university. This environment has been a call to action and our renewed strategy is designed to push RGU forward as a strong competitor.

RGU will be a disruptive, educational innovator, developing a distinctive university. This is our purpose and it's underpinned by Robert Gordon's early vision to create a brighter future for all through education. We want to be the dynamic partner of choice, leading higher education and standing out as a thought leader.

Five areas have been identified where RGU currently stands out as market leading and this is where our community can make the most impact. We call them our expertise: **Design, Energy, Smart Business, Healthcare and Therapeutics Innovation, and Culture and Public Policy.**

Within our expertise we have four core strengths: **pioneering educational innovation, championing access and inclusion, addressing challenges together, and engaging our communities.** All of you contribute to these strengths through your daily operations.

We're going to build upon these strengths to change our tomorrow. Here's our plan:

- **Achieve high graduate employability**
- **Enrich the student experience**
- **Drive research excellence to support stakeholders**
- **Offer innovation driven solutions**
- **Prioritise societal and economic impact**

This plan is underpinned by you, the RGU community. You are the heart of RGU and without you the university can't achieve its ambitions.

Our World

Our Purpose

Our Expertise

Our Strengths

Our Plan

Here are some examples of our strategy translated into action from across the RGU community:

Paul Hagan Vice Principal for Research

RGU's Board has endorsed an ambitious plan to support research excellence with the largest research investment ever made by the university. The phased release of up to £27m over the next ten years will be used to build critical mass in targeted areas where we have established research leadership.

Building on the success of Professors David Gray (Sustainable Transport), Richard Laing (Built Environment Visualisation), Linda Lawton (Industrial Biotechnology), John McCall (Smart Data and Artificial Intelligence) and Derek Stewart (Pharmacy Practice), the plan aims to stimulate excellence in interdisciplinary research by recruiting additional research leaders to strengthen their groups and add value and diversity to their ground-breaking research programmes.

RGU's research will remain focused on delivering innovative research solutions for business and industry that provide economic, societal, environmental and cultural benefits.

The expanded research teams will be supported with cohorts of postdoctoral research assistants and postgraduate students. A 'pump-priming' fund will be available to support interdisciplinary projects and integrated training programmes for postgraduates and early

“RGU's research will remain focused on delivering innovative research solutions for business and industry that provide economic, societal, environmental and cultural benefits.”
- Paul Hagan

career researchers will help embed interdisciplinary working in our next generation of researchers.

The investment is expected to deliver an increase in the volume and scale of successful external grant awards, an increase in publications in quality journals and an improved international reputation.

Look out for further information on the research investment in a new publication focusing solely on RGU's research activities, due out in June.

Liz Hancock Head of the School of Health Sciences

The School of Health Sciences is focused on enhancing the quality of what we offer while working to make ourselves distinctive and competitive in the market.

Two of the main challenges facing national and global public health are the ageing population and the ever increasing incidence of long-term health conditions. Addressing these is fundamental and they've played a driving forcing in shaping the provision of the School. One outcome is the development of four-year integrated undergraduate Masters' degree courses in Diagnostic Radiography, Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, and Physiotherapy. These have been developed to meet the future educational and professional skill needs for professionals working in an integrated health and social care environment. Furthermore, the synergies identified across several schools in the University have progressed high value cross-disciplinary work to meet learner and industry needs and we are currently involved in the creation of three exciting new courses.

Another aim of the School is to challenge the norm. We're seeking new opportunities for postgraduate and commercial growth and looking to build our capacity in research.

Our research reputation is critical, which is why we've collaborated with NHS Grampian to invest in a clinical professor to further develop research in the areas of self-management and digital health.

On top of this we aim to extend the range of provision off campus and challenge current models of delivery to meet industry needs, while also proactively discussing graduate and modern apprenticeships in the field of sport, physical activity, public health and enablement. We're looking to widen access and a good example is Sports and Exercise Science where we've created a bespoke route into Sports Coaching, extending the opportunities for college students.



David McClean
Head of the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture
& Built Environment



The Scott Sutherland School is focused on growth, in terms of student numbers and market share, research and commercial income and also community engagement and reputational capital. In short, it's about sustained competitiveness.

The opportunities are considerable

but the intensity of market competition and resource limitations demand that the School's approach is both focused and ambitious.

Whilst growth objectives aren't in themselves new, the School's approach to them is. We've developed a new focus for the School and reworked its principal narrative. Rather than a grouping of subjects, the School's activity will now be structured by a framework of three key cross-disciplinary themes founded on existing subject strength. These themes will steer interdisciplinary research development, course portfolio growth, curriculum development and brand us as thought leaders.

"The opportunities are considerable but the intensity of market competition and resource limitations demand that the School's approach is both focused and ambitious."

- David McClean

The School is also planning on addressing the rapid digitisation of the construction industry, whether in terms of the design process, fabrication and assembly or process management. Progressive digitisation also extends to course delivery. For example, in collaboration with Gray's School of Art, we propose to pilot a virtual design studio, offering greater flexibility for learners and opening up new markets currently unexplored by the UK higher education sector.

The School is already heavily committed to the access and inclusion agenda through the Access to Creative Education in Scotland (ACES) programme and Graduate Apprenticeships. However, targeting gender imbalances in specific professional areas is also high on the School's forward agenda. Whilst the primary motivation for this rightly accords with contemporary social expectations, it will also help growth of the applicant pool, market share, and reputation in the medium to long-term.



Jan Cutting
Director of Marketing

Many people only associate brand with a logo, however, a strong and impactful brand strategy is always much more than just its visual representation. To ensure a relevant and results driven approach to marketing, the organisational vision should be at its core. As such, RGU's updated strategy was the starting point for the brand refresh project.

In the initial phase of our brand review, we conducted extensive research among our stakeholders, including staff, students, partners, competitors, potential students and alumni. From this we extrapolated a new brand, customer-facing proposition and design guidelines. These support and enhance our strategic ambitions, the external perception of the University and our position in the marketplace.

Central to our new brand is our customer-facing tagline, Change Our Tomorrow, a reflection of RGU's reinvigorated purpose:

Change Our Tomorrow is an invitation for students, staff and partners, it's also a reflection of RGU's core values. It's active in establishing RGU as a driver of change and it underpins the style of education RGU provides; practical, vocational and experienced, changing higher education for the better. All designed so that we are preparing the workforce to become change agents of tomorrow.

Many of you will already have seen the updated visuals and 'Change Our Tomorrow' tagline, most prominently on the cover of the 2019 undergraduate prospectus. Over the coming weeks and months you will see more and more evidence of the results of the brand review including phase one of our website upgrade, campus graphics and external campaigns and messaging.

Of course our brand can only come to life if RGU, and all of us who are part of it, demonstrate that collectively we think differently in our approach to education. To that end, we hope you find the message empowering and an opportunity to forge positive change to our, and your, future.

Our World

The external market factors which are driving change

Our Purpose

Our response to the changing market creates our purpose

Our Expertise

Where we stand out as market leading, this is where we can make the most impact

Our Strengths

Through daily operations all staff drive our strengths

Our Plan

How we'll build upon our strengths to change our tomorrow

A Balancing Act

Fresh from speaking at the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change conference, focusing on the topic of cities and climate change science, Leslie Mabon, Senior Lecturer talks *RGView* through some of his research in the area.

“Did you know that by 2050, around 70% of the world’s population will live in cities?” asks Leslie. “Already, cities are responsible for a large proportion of environmental issues and this is only set to grow. This however also makes them sites where there is a brilliant capacity to imagine solutions and recently this has been where I’ve focused my work.”

Leslie’s entire research career has had a common theme; building consensus on finding acceptable outcomes for environmental issues that are typically seen as contentious. Issues, where essentially, there’s a need to balance what’s socially desirable with what’s scientifically appropriate.

“This idea of balancing science with society was integral to the work we’ve recently completed in Taipei, Taiwan,” says Leslie. “This was in collaboration with Dr Wan-Yu Shih in Taiwan’s Ming Chuan University. We were evaluating how the city is adapting to address climate change, for example building up green spaces and increasing community access to them, collecting rainfall, mitigating heat island effects and protecting biodiversity. By evaluating their activities, effectively providing an external check, this allows us to connect what they are doing to what else is going on worldwide.”

“By 2050, around 70% of the world’s population will live in cities”



Leslie’s research is more qualitative, looking at how knowledge is produced and how it’s used and translated within the decision-making process.

His collaborator Dr Shih works on the quantitative side of things. For example, using satellite images to understand where parks, trees, wetlands etc are located around a city and understanding what value they can provide to the urban environment and society.

How can you help your local area adapt?

Think creatively about the different ways in which you can use the green and open spaces around you. How can they deliver benefits to society and the environment? This could be growing vegetables, speaking to the local council to see how you can better support storm water retention, or using community parks to enable people to connect, building better social relations.

Future focus

“There’s a great quote by a late Scottish geographer called Neil Smith, ‘there’s no such thing as a natural disaster,’ and this couldn’t be more applicable to climate change,” says Leslie. “We need to make sure we strive to understand the specific actions required across a city to respond to climate change, and we also need to continually check that this is translating into ways to benefit those who need it most. It’s important to make sure that the knowledge we’re generating is shared widely, not just in conferences. Truly creating impact will require the effort of all so we need to make sure the information is accessible. Our research focus is now expanding to Fukuoka in Japan and also to Glasgow. The plan is to develop our findings from Glasgow over the coming months.”

This research is funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Ministry of Science and Technology Taiwan. [Read Leslie’s and his collaborator’s paper](#): ‘What might ‘just green enough’ urban development mean in the context of climate change adaptation? The case of urban greenspace planning in Taipei Metropolis, Taiwan’, in the World Development scientific journal.

You can read more about Leslie’s collaborative research on cities via the [research blog](#), or on Twitter [@urbangreendiary](#).





Image: Paul de Leeuw, Director OGI



UKCS Review: The Results

Towards the end of 2017, Paul de Leeuw and the RGU Oil and Gas Institute embarked on a project with global energy skills body, Opito, to map out the current state of the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) workforce and assess the changing skills requirements for the industry over the next 20 years.

The research will assist in providing a roadmap for a new skills strategy to ensure the sector is ready to take advantage of emerging roles and diversification opportunities.

Paul de Leeuw - "Technology, innovation and the transition to a lower carbon future will re-shape the sector. With over 40,000 people potentially entering the industry over the next 20 years and with a substantial proportion of the workforce to be up-skilled, there is a critical role for training providers, vocational institutes and universities to help future-proof the sector and to ensure the UK retains its reputation as a leading energy basin."

The Research

The analysis was based on interviews and information received from over 35 companies and organisations. The information collected comprises representative data from both the operator and supply chain communities.

The workforce data collected totalled around 34,000 roles, representing c 50% of the gross operated production in the UKCS and 20% of the total direct and indirect workforce. The extensive data collected and its analysis provides a unique insight on the make-up of the workforce engaged in the UKCS.

The review is a 2035 outlook, aligned to the Industry's and the Oil and Gas Authority's [Vision 2035](#), aimed at ensuring that appropriate action can be taken across the industry to sustain more jobs and to ensure that the workforce has the required skills to take advantage of the new roles that will emerge.

The Findings

Looking forward to 2035 and assessing the impact of a range of scenarios, the analysis shows that:

- Over 40,000 people are expected to enter the industry over the next 20 years, including around 10,000 people in new areas such as data science, data analytics, robotics, material science, change management and remote operations.
- Over 80,000 workers are likely to retire or leave the sector for other reasons by 2035.
- Following the downturn between 2014 and 2017, the industry lost over 70,000 direct and indirect jobs (a decline rate of c 10% per year). On the basis that the industry can achieve goals around Vision 2035 and energy diversification, decline is expected to be around 1.5% per year in line with production estimates, so from 170,000 people in 2017 to around 130,000 people in 2035 (much of which will be offset by retirement/natural attrition)
- Closer collaboration is required between industry and training providers to up-skill and re-skill the workforce to enhance technology capabilities across the industry and ensure it's competing effectively with other sectors for the best candidates.

John MacDonald, CEO Opito - "As the industry emerges from the downturn, it's crucial that we take a longer term look at the future UK oil and gas skills requirements. A new skills strategy will help us to take action now to prepare for emerging roles and ensure the existing workforce is being given opportunities to up-skill."

"Whilst total employment will fall over the next two decades, this will be a more gradual process than the sharp hit experienced over the last three years. If the industry can work together to achieve ambitions around production and energy diversification, tens of thousands more roles can be safeguarded and our industry will continue to be one of the most vital industrial sectors in the UK for years to come."

- A new skills strategy is now required to ensure the industry responds effectively to securing future talent requirements and achieving the best case scenario to safeguard posts.

To read the full report, please visit the RGU Oil and Gas Institute [website](#).

Preserving our Cultural Heritage

When you walk across campus you'll undoubtedly notice some impressive pieces of art along the way. From the ticking kinetic sculpture made from flower petals in the hallway of Garthdee House, to the intricate portraits and colourful abstract work lining the concourse of the Sir Ian Wood Building, each piece has a story.

"This work forms part of RGU's Art and Heritage Collections," explains George Cheyne, Collections Assistant based at Kaim House. "The collections have been awarded Full Museum Accreditation by Museums Galleries Scotland so they are recognised as a material record of student achievement, study and research, and an important part of the north east's history."

"Whilst my work is primarily concerned with preserving the physical pieces, these objects did not just appear out of nowhere. The names attached to them are not just names to me, they're people, whose work I respect and continue to admire therefore I wish their stories and their inspirations are told."



Meet George Cheyne

A drawing and painting alumnus of Gray's School of Art (Gray's), George returned to RGU as a Library Assistant in the early 90s. His role focuses on chronicling the creative output of the university's students, ensuring its cultural heritage is preserved.

He spent the years in between as drummer of a post-punk band called 'APB'. The band enjoyed success, particularly touring in the United States, opening for James Brown in Brooklyn in the early 80s. The band also played the Mudd Club which is famous for early shows by Talking Heads and Blondie. George's time in New York City inspired the photographs used as part of an RGU exhibition featuring his work.

While in the UK, the band recorded several sessions for John Peel's Radio 1 show and opened for The Clash. During one gig in New York City, George's drumsticks were picked up by a collector who was particularly taken with the band. His drumsticks have since been featured in Manhattan's Hard Rock Café and Cleveland's Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame as part of this collection.

In 2010 music by APB featured as part of the sound of '80s New York in the documentary film Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child, while in 2016, the band's music featured in the Call of Duty video game.



[Click to watch APB...](#)

Tip of the Iceberg

George likens every museum to an iceberg; the work on display is only a small selection of the entire collection, and RGU's offering is no different. The collections feature the work of past students of painting, architecture, fashion, graphic design, printmaking and needlework and embroidery, amongst others. They also boast a collection of scientific and engineering equipment and photographs. The following pages show three of the collections' most well-known painting alumni.



Still Life with Banana

Famous for beach views and portraiture, Alberto Morrocco OBE studied at Gray's in the 1930s when he was just 14 years old.

He was elected as a fellow of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1962 and was also awarded the San Vita Romano Prize and both the Guthrie and Carnegie Awards. His work is displayed in public and private collections throughout Britain.



Exposed Painting Dioxazene Mauve, Violet, Scheveningen Black

Callum Innes studied Drawing and Painting at Gray's from 1980 to 1984, completing a post-graduate degree at Edinburgh College of Art in 1985. He was shortlisted for the Turner and Jerwood Prizes in 1995, won the prestigious NatWest Prize for Painting in 1998, and in 2002 was awarded the Jerwood Prize for Painting. He has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally and his work is held in many public collections worldwide.

Ziggurat Island



Dr Ian McKenzie Smith CBE studied at Gray's in the 1950s. His work is abstract and based on landscapes. He was involved in art in Aberdeen for over thirty years and is a past president of the Royal Scottish Academy, the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour and a former Trustee of the National Galleries of Scotland. His work is featured in public and private collections across Europe, North America and Japan.

There are around **7800 objects** in the collection, including over **700 paintings** and around **600 drawings and prints**. The earliest painting dates back to **1916** but the majority of the collection dates from the **1950s**.

Get-Away Special

Here's a slightly unusual addition to the collections. The payload for the NASA Get-Away Special G-490 mission was developed by students and staff of the School of Engineering...

...and it flew on the Endeavor shuttle mission STS-77 in May 1996. The payload carried two experiments; one to measure low-level gravitational forces by examining their effect on the convection currents present in heated liquid; and a series of controlled experiments to study the effects of space flight on the germination of oats, wheat, barley and rape seeds. During the eight day flight the payload performed as planned.

Work is currently ongoing to relocate the collection and the hope is to have the works available to be viewed by students and staff alike. Find out more about the collections by [visiting their website](#). Or watch a [video tour](#) of the collection itself.



Image: The payload shell forms part of the Art and Heritage Collections

Degree Shows

Each year, during the Degree Shows, RGU awards purchase prizes to successful students who study a range of courses offered by both Gray's and the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture & Built Environment. The works are collected by the university and retained for future display. This year's Degree Shows begin on Saturday 16 June and runs for two weeks. Pop down to show your support and see which pieces will be added to the Collections.

Look Again 2018

LOOK
AGAIN

• ART WEEKENDER •

A key cultural initiative of RGU, the Look Again Visual Art & Design Festival is back for 2018, and this year presents new, high-quality commissioned work by prominent artists and designers from the north east and further afield.

Grounded in a strong commitment to support the art and design sector in the region, Look Again develops innovative mentoring and professional development projects, cultivating new art and design collectives that encourage creative talent to stay in the region.

The festival is laying the foundations for the next exciting chapter in Aberdeen's cultural history, helping shape a new story, change mindsets and raise awareness of the region's great creative potential.

In celebration of Scotland's Year of Young People 2018, this year's Look Again features inspiring events and exhibitions around the theme of 'serious play'.

2018 Highlights

James Rigler A House in the Woods

This ambitious new work responds to Aberdeen's awe-inspiring Marischal Quad, where Rigler will get playful with the diverse and contradictory nature of the surrounding Gothic architecture. Conceiving of this grand public space as a magical clearing in the woods, he presents a fairy tale proposition to enchant and bring joy to the renowned granite austerity of this iconic square.

Supermundane Super Aberdeen

Internationally-acclaimed graphic artist Supermundane (aka Rob Lowe) has racked up an impressive array of high profile projects thanks to his fresh, colourful and constantly inventive approach to design. For Look Again, he teams up with Aberdeen-based artist collective STACK to deliver workshops with young people across the city in partnership with RGU's Streetsport, which will result in designs for a new public artwork.

Emily Speed Facades/Fronts

Speed will explore human beings' transition to adulthood and the forming of identity through a series of workshops with young people, in collaboration with choreographer Jack Webb. The project will provide a playful and supportive space to develop ideas, with the final work being both a film and a public performance. The film will also be shown as part of Scotland + Venice at the Venice Biennale of Architecture.

Positive Geographies Curated by Dr Jon Blackwood

This exhibition of ambitious new work by six recent graduates from Gray's School of Art includes film, installation, sculpture and performance art. It offers new perspectives on place, identity and materiality in a constantly expanding and ever-more challenging digital world.

Look Again Art Weekender takes place on campus and at various sites across Aberdeen from **Thu 14-Sun 17 June**. Find out more at www.lookagainfestival.co.uk

**“There’s a way
to do it better -
find it”**

- Thomas A. Edison



RGView gets to know Gordon McConnell, Vice Principal for Commercial and Regional Innovation.

Tell us about yourself

I’m a recovering entrepreneur and ex-consultant, with industry experience who accidentally started working in higher education for six months - 15 years ago!

What’s your focus?

The whole portfolio holds a number of important roles, ranging from student recruitment, admissions and marketing to business development and commercial activity to the Gatehouse design agency. We’re hoping to soon add new innovation related activities and initiatives to this already large body of work while supporting innovation across the university.

In your experience, what is innovation?

Innovation means different things to different people. It can be creativity, ideation, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship (entrepreneurship within an existing organisation) or process improvement. From an RGU perspective this means tapping into a long innovative history and focusing that passion to suit the challenges of the 21st century.

Any examples?

Innovation is not new to RGU, indeed it’s a firm theme of our strategy. RGU’s founder, Robert Gordon, would today be seen as a social entrepreneur, while the decision to pivot into being a college in 1881 would be termed social innovation. More recently we see examples of innovation throughout our community; an example is the Graduate Apprenticeships. I’ve also met quite a few alumni entrepreneurs, some of whom are based in RGU’s incubator on Garthdee road.

Describe the road ahead.

We’re building a culture where everyone, regardless of their role, feels accountable for innovation. I think a vast majority of people here are already being innovative. What the university needs to do is free them up and allow them to try out and scale the really good ideas. But again innovation must have purpose, so collaboration across the organisation to make sure innovation is strategic is vital.

We’re also working on new initiatives for entrepreneurship that will tie in with other activities already going on across the community and we’ll be launching new innovation extracurricular teaching programmes for students, staff and industry.

What are you most proud of?

I guess the various mass-startup and mentoring programmes that I’ve run in different countries. This is something that has definitely given me the biggest sense of being useful over recent years! You cannot be anything but positive when you interact with the energy of new entrepreneurs, it’s infectious. I’m hoping to bring some of this energy to RGU.

Final thoughts.

I think there is a bright future ahead. This university has been steeped in innovation since it began. With its particular emphasis on excellence in teaching and its close relationship with the ‘real world’ and employability needs, I think the shift to an innovation focused agenda is considerably easier for RGU than for most universities. I’m looking forward to the challenge and heartened by the welcome I’ve received here in Aberdeen.

Spotlight on: Student Research

Valuable research is taking place throughout the university community all the time and the student body is a significant contributor to this. This running series will uncover the Research Student Association (RSA) and the student research projects currently ongoing.

The RSA

The central goal of RGU’s Research Student Association is to connect research students from across the university community. It allows research students to network, providing them with a vital social platform to share ideas, integrate and support one another, but also to relax and have fun.

“Back in March, we held the first RSA Research Showcase. Held along the Sir Ian Wood Building concourse, fourteen members of the association discussed their projects with anyone who popped by to listen,” explains Reggie Ankrah, Co-President of the RSA and a research student within the School of Computing and Digital Media. “It was a great way to highlight the student research that is going on and we saw hundreds of people stop and engage. The showcase was made possible after the RSA’s proposal to highlight some of the research going on throughout the university was awarded funding from the RGU Foundation.

“Currently, the association has around 80 members from across the university community. It’s open to those who are actively researching and those who are interested in pursuing a research career in the future. The association often works with the university to further support the entire research student network; notably, we were instrumental in achieving 24 hour access to the university for research students. The co-presidents this year are myself and Calum McNerney.”

If you’d like to find out more about the RSA and how to join then just [send them an email](#).



Calum McNerney explains his research project on pot ale, a by product of the whisky industry.

Our History:

Ishbel Gordon

This historical series profiles the individuals whose names adorn RGU's buildings and who've shaped the university as we know it.



Image: National Trust for Scotland

The wife of the first Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair, the Governor-General of Canada and Lord Lieutenant (Viceroy) of Ireland, Ishbel Gordon became known for her significant social initiatives in Aberdeen, Ireland and Canada.

While Lord and Lady Aberdeen's Scottish Estate in Aberdeenshire, Haddo House, was their main home, they divided their time between Ireland and Canada after Lord Aberdeen was appointed government posts in both countries.

Ishbel initiated and supported numerous societies and organisations to benefit women in particular, including the Aberdeen Ladies' Union (1883) which provided educational and recreational facilities for working girls.

In Ireland, she pioneered the Women's National Health Association

In Ireland, she pioneered the Women's National Health Association, a mother-and-child welfare organisation. She supported universal suffrage and was president for some years of the International Council of Women. In Scotland she also led a number of initiatives and played a vital role in securing the ordination of women to the Church of Scotland ministry.

In 1893, Lord Aberdeen was appointed the Governor General of Canada, a post he would occupy until 1898. The Aberdeens were no strangers to the country as they had visited several times before; during their cross-Canada tour of 1890 they purchased a homestead in British Columbia. On that same visit they crossed the prairies and Ishbel was struck by the difficult and isolated lifestyle of pioneers. She subsequently founded the Aberdeen Association for Distribution of Good Literature to Settlers in the West which sent settlers packages of books and magazines.

In 1893, the year she arrived in Canada, she was named the first president of the International Council of Women, an organisation that campaigned for women's rights. Consequently, she organised the National Council of Women of Canada and travelled the country establishing local branches. She was the first sponsor of the Women's Art of Association of Canada, founded in 1892, and she was also the first woman to receive an honorary degree from Queens University in Canada in 1897.

Ishbel Gordon identified with Canada and Canadians for the rest of her life, stating a few years before her death in 1939: "I have been a Canadian for many years. I shall always be a Canadian." Various streets and bridges in Canada are named Aberdeen after Ishbel or her husband.

Opinion

Rise up Quines!

By Professor Sarah Pedersen



I've travelled around Scotland for the last six months speaking about the Scottish suffragettes. These women endured a great deal in their quest for the vote. They addressed large crowds in the open air, sometimes standing on carts or stools to enable their audience to hear them better, without any amplification, shouting over heckling and abuse in order to get their message across. Sometimes rowdy members of the crowd threw mud or stones at them. They were physically attacked, pulled from their place of safety, their clothes ripped and hats pulled off, while the police stood back, or even tried to arrest them.

It must have been incredibly hard for these women to break the taboos of Edwardian society and make their demands in public. Women were supposed to stay in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers. They weren't expected to have political opinions or demands of their own.

That all changed in 1918 when (some) women were granted the right to vote in Parliamentary elections. At the same time, women also won the right to stand as Parliamentary candidates. We now have women leaders in both Holyrood and Westminster.

However, how much has really changed? The newspapers carry almost daily reports of vile attacks and threats of violence against women politicians and others in the public eye. In comparison to the attacks on the suffragettes, these attacks are sent anonymously via social media. In 2013 the MP Stella Creasy received rape and death threats when she participated in a campaign to put the image of Jane Austen on the £10 note. In the wake of the death of Jo Cox in 2016, many politicians re-considered their own security measures. Jess Phillips had a 'panic room' installed at her constituency office and additional security fitted at home after receiving death threats. Abuse is even worse when gender and race intersect. In 2017 an Amnesty International report revealed that Diane Abbott received nearly half of all abusive tweets sent to female MPs during the run-up to the general election.

Threats and abuse have a silencing effect on women's participation in political life. Yes, we have women political leaders and in positions of power throughout Scotland. But not enough of them. In Scotland only 35% of MSPs, 17% of MEPs, 25% of councillors, 16% of council leaders, and 23% of Trade Union leaders are women. We need to encourage women's participation in politics, and for this to happen we need to ensure that the political sphere is free of misogynistic and racist abuse.

To celebrate women's political achievements in the past and encourage more women to step into political life in the future, a Festival of Women and Politics will run in Aberdeen in November. Called Rise up Quines!, and supported by both universities, the city council and other organisations, the Festival features key speakers from the worlds of activism and politics, workshops, films and cultural events. I hope to see you there!

"The newspapers carry almost daily reports of vile attacks and threats of violence against women"

Storytelling

By Amy Wareing, Academic Practice Developer, DELTA

For four years I've been looking at classroom teaching and the role of storytelling. Stories can be a catalyst for transformative thinking, facilitating powerful changes to identity. They can be used to challenge students - to question their own, each other's and indeed the educator's values or belief sets.

Here are my top tips...

1 Storytelling is not a special power

A student once told me: "I think that the more passionate a lecturer is about something, the more I'm going to listen and be interested in it. If they're not interested in it, then why should I be?"

Telling stories is not a 'mysterious' superpower. Things such as relevance, timing, tone, pace and having a knowledge of the topic area all come into play. But, the most important delivery skill is passion.

2 Tune in to the emotive part of the story

Emotions (shocking, sad, and funny) are powerful ways of commanding engagement. Creating an emotive response can be a potential catalyst for transformative learning but the authenticity of the emotion and the story is crucial.

3 Keep it real or 'make' it real

Real stories are relatable to learners – these can be from personal experience, shared from others, or can be the story narratives of other experts. All of these appear to be equally valuable.

4 Stories are useful for transitions

Transitions into different environments can be challenging for students - such as starting university or undertaking work placements. When a student is dealing with a difficulty or facing the unknown, learning from the experiences of those who came before them is always a big step towards building resilience and success.

5 Having some useful resources in place helps

Wider literature has suggested that supporting stories with visual aids can promote student interest - such as using physical, photographic or other visual resources. Resources that immerse the listener into the 'world' of the story can add to the impact of the learning. Technology such as augmented and virtual reality are an exciting area of development.



Where to start?

By Edward Pollock, Events Management Student and Employability Project Assistant for RGU.

I don't know about you but I've definitely found the idea of embarking on a career after my course ends quite daunting. I've been fortunate so far in that my two years as Student President of Communications and Democracy, and my role in RGU's Employability and Professional Enrichment Hub have provided me with some valuable insight into beginning a career. Nevertheless in just a few months, I'm sure they'll fly by, I'll be a graduate, like many of you. So, I'd like to share with you some of the advice I've picked up throughout my time at RGU.

Understand your experience

Whether on your CV, in an application or in an interview, you need to know your work and academic experience inside out; it's not as simple as just sticking it on your CV.

Ask yourself: can I break down all the skills I learned from each role? What impact did I make from those roles? How does that experience fit with the job I'm applying for?

Reflecting on it can help you succeed. Once you know the value that you can bring to a team then you will be prepared for any stage of recruitment.

Consider all your options

Many people think that leaving university is about finding a graduate job. While that is the case for many, there are loads of other valuable options to consider.

Starting your own business is a massive opportunity with loads of support and training, and by becoming an entrepreneur you can positively impact the future of your industry. There are also further study options such as postgraduate degrees or research opportunities.

Think about what you want for your career, and consider the various paths you could take. Don't focus on others, only you know what the best path is for you. The fact that you can start a career through a variety of ways is what keeps the workplace interesting.

Think like a recruiter

If you see a job you like, start by looking at the job from the perspective of the recruiter.



From the advertisement or job description, what would you be looking for? What stands out about the person the advert is looking for? Then break down your experience and skills and tailor it to the role.

Make it easy for the recruiter to tick all the boxes outlined in the job description. By seeing it from someone else's eyes, you can make yourself stand out even more.

Get support and advice

The employability teams at RGU offer a huge amount of advice and support such as CV drop in sessions, online modules and events and activities. There is also the yearly What's Next Conference which is a great chance to find out about all of the different avenues. It's really useful to get that extra help and be sure that you have covered all bases when planning your career. RGU's Employability and Professional Enrichment Hub is still available to you even after you graduate.

Further information on [employability support](#) can be found online.

Behind the Mic

- Edel Harris



Back in early March, in honour of the worldwide celebrations for International Women's Day, RGU conferred honorary degrees on three distinguished women: Alice Brown, Emeritus Professor of Politics and former Vice Principal at the University of Edinburgh; Sheila Rowan, Professor of Physics and Astronomy and Director of the Institute for Gravitational Research; and Edel Harris, Chief Executive of Cornerstone.

Edel Harris later sat down for an interview with RGU Talk to look back at her career, leading up to her new Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration.

"I was surprised and genuinely humbled..."

Edel started her career as an officer in the Metropolitan Police, before leaving the force to care for her son, who was born with a disability. She quickly discovered a new calling and achieved a first class honours degree in health and social care from the Open University.

She began working with NHS Grampian, covering health improvement and promotion, which gave her a foundation for supporting the more vulnerable members of society.

After a stint as Deputy Chief Executive of Aberdeen Foyer, addressing concerns about youth homelessness and unemployment, she joined the health and social care charity Cornerstone as Chief Executive in 2008.

"Our charitable purpose is to enable the people we support to live a valued life – a life that they choose..."

Since she took up the post, Cornerstone has grown and broadened its remit from focusing on adults with learning disabilities, to encompass services specialising in dementia, mental health, children and families and also helping recently released prisoners reintegrate into society.

Edel and her team have also given Cornerstone the ambitious agenda of revolutionising the social care sector in the UK.

In addition to her work with Cornerstone, Edel served a two-year term as the first female President of the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. During that time, she would receive honours including the Aberdeen and Grampian Regional Director Prize and being named Ernst and Young Scotland Entrepreneur of the Year – the first female to do so.

Looking back on her career in this year celebrating the centenary of women's partial suffrage, Edel can see how far society has come and is humbled at the suggestion that she can be a role model for young businesswomen following in her footsteps.



LISTEN TO THE PODCAST EPISODE HERE



"I hope that we can stop reporting on when a woman is the first woman to do something..."

- Edel Harris

RGView spoke to Anita, Senior Lecturer and Postgraduate Course Leader, to find out more about herself, her role and how she spends her spare time.

MEET ANITA WEIDMANN

Tell us about yourself.

I was born in Germany where I grew up until I moved to Scotland to study Pharmacy. As my mother is from Glasgow this was an easy move to make as I was lucky enough to be brought up bilingual.

What's your role?

I'm a Senior Lecturer in the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences and the Postgraduate Course Leader for the MSc in Clinical Pharmacy. This involves ensuring we offer cutting-edge education for qualified pharmacists who seek further education to stay competitive in today's market.

I'm also one of two team leaders for the Clinical and Practice Group, a support role ensuring my colleagues can do the best possible job in delivering both under- and postgraduate courses.

How did your career begin?

I studied at RGU and when I graduated I wasn't sure which sector of pharmacy I wanted to work in, so I spent the first couple of years gaining experience in community and hospital pharmacy as well as research and academia. I realised that I really enjoyed sharing my own experiences and working with ambitious students to help them develop into fully fledged

healthcare professionals, making me a natural fit for academia. I still work as an occasional locum Pharmacist to maintain my practice skill base.

I've worked in England, Canada and Germany but I've always been drawn back to Aberdeen. So, when a role at RGU came up I was interested. Aside from the fact that the university has an excellent reputation for educating pharmacists, it allows me to combine a job I enjoy with the great lifestyle that comes with living in the north east, where it's easy to enjoy both city and outdoor based activities.

What have you learned throughout your career?

The most captivating realisation for me is that there is so much more for us to discover about the intricate molecular workings of the human body. With all of our amazing technological and medical advances, there is still so much left to explore. It's a little like the universe.

Tell us something we don't know about you.

Competitive swimming is something I took up seven years ago. Having been involved in various competitive sports all my life I was looking for something which challenged me but also had a great team spirit. I've developed my physical capabilities through RGU Sport's Talented Athlete Programme and I ended up competing at the 2017 World Masters Swimming Championships. This was an incredible experience. Looking back at the full 12 month journey I can honestly say that swimming in the vast arena was both



terrifying and exhilarating. It's the amazing people I met on the way that stand out to me. The coaches, teammates, family and friends who have been part of this journey every step of the way, creating experiences and memories which will stick with me forever. Plus, I accidentally discovered that the answer to all of life's questions is "more hips" (a common response shouted by my coach).

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Work hard – life can take away everything you own and that is dear to you, but it can't take away the knowledge and wisdom you've accumulated.

The Grapevine

If a quote captures your interest click it for more information

"Achievements are collective achievements."

Sheila Rowan, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Glasgow and Director for the Institute of Gravitational Research, reflecting on the nature of celebrating success in her field as she picked up an honorary degree on International Women's Day

"There is a positive future that lies ahead, but it's going to require society to work together. I like the idea of cars that fly and I like the idea of being able to fly to work in the morning, but we're not necessarily heading for a future of a night-time forever, where it's always raining."



Professor Richard Laing, Built Environment Visualisation, on how technology can be harnessed to help us find a bright future.

"It's a coalition of the willing, deeds not words. You've got to roll your sleeves up, get stuck in and make things happen."

Professor David Gray, Academic Lead, Orkney Project, describing the solutions driven approach to the project



"In the UK, less than 10% of new housing stock is designed by an architect."

Professor Gokay Deveci, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment

"Megatrend describes changes in our world that are big in terms of impact, unmatched in terms of change and probably unstoppable in terms of progress."

Paul de Leeuw, Director OGI opening his professorial lecture 'Making the Trend your Friend'

"Every kilo of plastic takes seven litres of petroleum and that doesn't include processing. Our plastic consumption is not sustainable. There are many waste materials which could be used to provide environmentally friendly and sustainable bioplastic."

Christine Edwards, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences discussing her research on bioplastics