

SPRING '19 | ISSUE 03

RGView

Connecting the University Community

AN ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE

ONE STUDENT'S TRIP TO
THE ICY CONTINENT

MENTALIZING AN INTRODUCTION

READY, SET...

INNNOVATE!

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

MEET RGU'S ACCESS AND
ARTICULATION TEAM

HOW RGU IS HELPING ACCELERATE START-UPS TO SUCCESS



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TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Share your RGView, your stories and your thoughts with the editor by [emailing RGU Communications](#).



This issue of RGView represents how the university's strategy is being realised through its community and culture. It features a snapshot of the collaborative work and activities which are contributing to the delivery of our strategic aims. To celebrate our recent achievement of a further 180 graduate apprenticeships, we hear from some of the mentors and mentees that have taken part in the first cohort to understand how the courses have impacted on their professional lives. We also mark the launch of the university's start-up accelerator programme by giving you the opportunity to read the elevator pitches of the successful businesses. The start-up accelerator is a strong example of our commitment to stimulating and diversifying the region's economic development by supporting the yearly creation of new businesses. Spending a few minutes reading the article will give you a better understanding of the innovative and exciting ideas that the teams are bringing to the table. A profile of the Access and Articulation team, and the important work they are doing with schools and colleges to extend the reach of higher education, is also featured. There is an update on our partnership work with students to enhance the student experience, and a closer look at the Integra House, a sustainable architectural design created by Professor Gokay Deveci.

I hope you will spend some time browsing through these pages and enjoy this glimpse of the impressive work going on throughout our community.

John Harper
Principal

the INTEGRA HOUSE



In the heart of rural Aberdeenshire sits a home, which, in comparison to the other houses and agricultural buildings in the surrounding area, may look a bit out of place. Designed and project managed by RGU's Professor Gokay Deveci, from the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, the three-bedroomed home is at the forefront of innovative affordable housing.

The Integra House, built in Tyrie just outside Fraserburgh, is designed to offer an affordable and low-energy concept for rural living by applying the roof truss concept to the whole house including walls, floors and roof.

Gokay's design offers an entirely new construction concept for rural living. Roof trusses are the most common and cost effective way to build roofs in the UK. The house uses the well-understood concept and technology of truss manufacturing to design a new truss type which will provide the super structure and building envelope for the entire house, including floors, walls and the roof.

The design utilises a thick blown wood wool insulation solution to meet the 'breathable' wall construction, as well as meeting the very low-energy standards in a cost effective manner. The wood-burning stove, which sits in the main living area overlooking the picturesque Aberdeenshire countryside, provides the majority of the heat for the home, with an innovative natural heat distribution concept being trialled.

"We are in a position where there is ongoing critical shortage of affordable housing and a huge issue of fuel poverty in rural Scotland – it's sometimes a case of heat or eat," says Gokay.

"This development proves that an innovative, energy efficient and healthy home is possible on a low budget"

"This development proves that an innovative, energy efficient and healthy home is possible on a low budget, and the affordability has not been achieved at the expense of architectural design or construction quality.

"By using innovative methods for the construction of the Integra House, we have been able to address these problems and

create, what I believe, is a viable, affordable home for both the capital and life-cycle costs. The design enables a reduction of operations on site and the time spent erecting the structure while simplifying the processes involved."

Sustainable architecture embraces not only ecological and energy considerations, but also economic, societal and aesthetic aspects, all of which are reflected in this affordable rural house project. It stands as a joint initiative by the university and the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC) exploring the innovation in affordable rural housing design. It responds to advances in building technology and changing social and cultural patterns.

The project has been developed at RGU with research funding from CSIC, and two industry partners, Sylvan Stuart and Pasquill Ltd.

THE HRPV

Gokay is part of The Housing Research and Practice Unit (HRPU), an inter-disciplinary research group which is based within the Scott Sutherland School. The work the group is involved in has been undertaken in response to governmental concerns regarding the future provision, at a national level, of an energy efficient, sustainable, high-quality housing stock and place making.

The approach to the research has been innovative, transferable and problem-focused, involving the search for solutions to real design, social, economic and technical problems defined by industry and government agencies. The applied research focus is oriented towards real-world outcomes, with the purpose of providing solutions to challenges and identifying new opportunities for advancement in our regions and beyond.

The work of the group is already making positive impacts on individuals, communities and industries across the region.

The work of the group is already making positive impacts on individuals, communities and industries across the region. The applied research impact is apparent in improved industry processes, regional and economic development, productivity and innovation, social advancement and equity, and healthier communities.



Professor Gokay Deveci, architect of Integra House, walks us through the innovations of this new build and how it could improve the provision of energy efficient, sustainable and genuinely affordable housing.





Intro to mentalizing

By Dan Warrender, Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing and Centralisation Mentalization-Based Therapist, NHS Grampian

I've been learning about mentalization for the last seven years. Mentalizing is the process through which we make sense of ourselves and others. It's an important concept in understanding some mental health issues but it's also incredibly valuable for all of us in our day to day lives. Humans are social animals and social interaction requires mentalizing. I've outlined five key points about mentalizing to introduce you to the concept.

1. Behaviour is based on mental states

Behaviour always has a reason. Mentalizing is a process whereby we make sense of behaviour in terms of the mental states, often thoughts and feelings, behind it.

2. A process for making sense of ourselves and others

Mentalization is a concept in between mindfulness and empathy. We need awareness of our own thoughts and feelings and how they are driving us, though we also need to consider the experiences of others, and imagine what may be driving them. This has been described as seeing ourselves from the outside and others from the inside. Through this, we may better understand ourselves and clarify any misunderstandings with others.

3. Automatic to controlled

Mentalizing moves automatic assumptions to a controlled state of wonder and doubt. We never truly know what someone else is thinking or

feeling, and we may have fixed ideas or jump to conclusions. Mentalizing moves appearance to inference, as we look beyond the surface, give social situations context and speculate narratives which may make sense of behaviour.

4. Mentalizing ability fluctuates for everyone

Everyone will have a temporary loss of mentalizing, and some people may have a reduced overall capacity through failed attachments, childhood trauma or other developmental issues. Remember that not everyone sees the world as you do, and everyone can have a break in mentalizing if stressed, tired, intoxicated etc. We all get things wrong, but some more than others.

5. The impact of non-mentalizing

If a person is non-mentalizing they may lack self-awareness and leave others around them confused, or feel misunderstood and mistrust other people to the point of paranoia. This can be socially claustrophobic, when assumption and appearance win over inference and wonder. We are social animals with complex minds, and it can be very hard for us to maintain relationships without being able to mentalize.

The [Anna Freud Centre's website](#) is a great resource you can use if this has piqued your interest and you'd like some more information on mentalization.

SUPPORTING THE TRANS COMMUNITY

In November 2018, RGU published a transgender equality policy to reiterate a zero tolerance approach to transphobic abuse, harassment or bullying and show that as a university we are committed to creating a culture of inclusion. To mark the policy's launch, on Transgender Day of Remembrance, the Rainbow Staff Network invited Stevie Maybanks from the Scottish Fire Service to share her experience of transitioning in the workplace. We invited Stevie to write for RGView to share her thoughts on why having a trans policy in place is so important.

By Stevie Maybanks



Acceptance without exception

To be a part of the RGU drive for greater equality, inclusion and greater social awareness is an awesome honour. It's a breath of fresh air to see a university launch a transgender equality policy. It shows a real commitment to promoting equality and diversity, creating a supportive environment for all.

It's so important for educational establishments to know that supporting trans students and staff is not just about acknowledging their change of name or clothes. The institutions need to take the lead on support and inclusion because leaving trans people to be the educators puts an unwanted onus on them that can leave them both mentally and physically drained. A low level of trans awareness amongst staff and students contributes to a sense of isolation, so sustainably raising awareness of this issue is the first step in creating real cultural change. By putting proactive processes and a clear and concise trans policy in place, it will help to support this often overlooked and potentially vulnerable group. This demonstrates leadership that allows trans students and staff to study or do their job in an environment that respects and welcomes their gender identity regardless of how they express themselves.

A trans policy is not only crucial for current students and staff but can be used as a tool to



attract future talent. Stonewall's 2017 school report found that 64 percent of young trans people reported being bullied, 84 percent have self-harmed and 45 percent have tried to commit suicide. Having had such a negative experience in school it's important for institutions to demonstrate visible evidence of their LGBT+ support, allowing potential trans students to see they will be welcomed into a truly inclusive organisation. For some of these applicants

it's a chance to leave behind previous names, pronouns and experiences with an opportunity to transition and begin to live as their authentic selves. In 2014/15, 24 percent of trans students dropped out of university so I believe an active network of informed staff and students is vital to ensuring high attendance. All the more reason to have a clear and specific policy that will allay their fears of being misgendered or being outed to their peers without their permission.

Everyone should be involved in embracing new and current trans students and staff. As humans we have a responsibility and duty to be compassionate, supportive and considerate with everyone we meet. By demonstrating integrity, dignity and inclusivity in our organisations and in our everyday lives we each have a unique opportunity to make positive societal changes for the future.

Stevie Maybanks was the first uniformed firefighter in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to transition in the workplace. She joined the Royal Marines at 17, then worked as an outdoor educator, and then as a firefighter before moving into her current role of Local Support Officer in the training and employee development unit of the SFRS. She actively shares her story to raise awareness and was Stonewall Scotland's Role Model of the Year for 2018.

READY, SET... INNOVATE!



RGU's Start-up Accelerator programme has launched with 28 teams accepted into the first cohort. The successful businesses cover the creative industries, healthcare, digital, food and beverage, education, and technology. *RGView* brings you their elevator pitches.

Creative industries

UNTITLED COMICS

Untitled Comics

Daniel Cowie, Nicci Thompson and Cliff Hughes

We're convinced that the next Batman is already written. Have you read about it? No, because it's currently in the drawer of a creative who has no idea what to do with it. We're sure that the next Stranger Things screenplay is ready to go into production. When can you see it? Who knows, maybe never? Where does the British creative with the next great original comic book idea go? Surely there are plenty of British graphic novel publishing companies looking for original content in this day and age? No, there are actually very few. Untitled Comics is a graphic novel publishing and IP company that is dedicated to coming up with, and finding, the best new original content. We feel we're filling a gap in a currently monopolised market. We're a publisher for the creative, for the people. Imagination unleashed.

OFF-TREND.COM

Off-Trend.com

Catherine Gillespie

Off-Trend aims to provide style-minded individuals with an alternative choice of clothing for those who find that current fashion trends aren't to their taste. In doing so, the brand aims to support the work of student designers who grow their collections from authentic inspiration. These unique garments will be tailored to suit the lifestyles of busy professionals, who admire style, sophistication and individuality without compromising on practicality. Off-Trend also aims to do this in the most eco-friendly manner possible. The majority of our garments will be sustainably sourced, as well as emulating a timeless aesthetic. We hope this will allow people to build up their long-term wardrobes instead of throwing clothes away after a short time.



Valdone Au

Valdone Aukoriute and Kajetan Swiecki

We're a sustainable womenswear online retail brand with an advanced approach to garment construction and the use of smart textiles. We believe that application of nanotechnology in everyday fashion will radically change the garment's durability and longevity, influencing customer behaviour towards making smart purchases. With authentic design and the advantages of smart, sustainable textiles, we deliver a timeless product. We also provide a range of changeable details, encouraging a minimalist lifestyle: having less garments but still looking fresh. Our mission is to develop a responsible and transparent business model which, unlike other high-end fashion brands, focuses on sustainable and nanotechnology-improved textiles to enhance the garment's longevity. This way we aim to make a positive change in the fashion industry.

origin

Origin

Daniel Sutherland, Ben Durack and Scott Robertson

We provide a cost-effective solution with bespoke products made specifically from your waste that appeal to your consumer demographic. We reduce costs, we reduce waste, we design products, and we have a positive impact on the environment, all delivered with a global brand message.

Healthcare



Evolved Medical Monitors Ltd

Nicholas Dillon

We aim to redefine the future of patient monitoring by supporting non-medical and lesser-trained individuals. We'll do this through integrated decision support and user-focused interfaces to aid understanding of, and interaction with, advanced clinical monitoring techniques. This will allow for the identification of early signs of critical illness in patients. We'll also enable and support current advanced clinical staff to deliver high-quality patient focused care by designing user-focused monitoring equipment that fits both their needs and workflow.



Beltfree by Miss James

Emma James, Darren James and Diane Titterton

Miss James is a new innovative maternity range. Emma created a prototype while pregnant and needing extra support around the pelvis, sacroiliac joints and hips. Beltfree is the name of the product. It's the first shapewear maternity garment that does the job of a maternity belt and pelvic instability belt in an all-in-one and looks great on. Beltfree is currently in tights and leggings but this will grow as the business evolves.



Snap Digital

Will Farquhar, James Galbraith and Conor Gault

Snap is an end to end creative production agency that is bringing professional advertising and marketing services to the masses. We have streamlined the often cumbersome, inefficient and expensive process of hiring multiple agencies to execute marketing campaigns into a one stop shop, all under one roof. This allows our clients to tap directly into the pool of creative talent, consolidate marketing expenditure and react quickly to the environment around them.



Kærlig Beauty

Amy Alexander

After being diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer, I wanted to do two things: teach my children to be strong; and find an engaging way to ensure they checked themselves. It's known that early detection saves lives, my surgeon saw a change in my tumour within one week, and can also sometimes reduce the need for aggressive treatments. To support this, I aim to provide a beauty product that is specifically for regularly checking for breast and testicular cancers.



Young Life Savers Scotland

Scott Russell, Thomas Beedle, Andy Stott, Jessica Young and Jessica Johnston

We exist for children and parents throughout Scotland who wish to make a difference and save lives. We deliver first aid and life-saving training to children throughout Scotland, as well as paediatric first aid training to parents. Unlike other providers, our training is free and custom-designed to meet the requirements of everyone who chooses to use us. Due to our fantastic team of volunteers and sponsors, we're able to continue training the heroes of tomorrow.



Food and beverage



Coffee Scotland

Ross McLean, David Porteous and Ross Erskine

The greatest coffee roasted across Scotland available in one location; roasted fresh and delivered straight to your door. Coffee Scotland only works with the most exceptional coffee roasters and with their best beans to ensure whatever coffee you choose, you'll know that it's going to be a great one.



Sober Sweets

Alice Foster

My aim is to produce an up-market chocolate and confectionary brand producing sugar-free products. Unlike current sugar-free confectionary, this is not a 'diet' product and doesn't promote itself as 'free from', for instance gluten, dairy, vegan etc. This is because I believe in making chocolate and sweets to the highest standards of luxury so that my customers are satisfied with the flavour, preventing them from impulse buying the 'real stuff', this will directly reduce an individual's sugar consumption.

Education



LiteSTAT

Stuart Waddell and Ed Watson

We're aiming to improve the teaching of science in high schools and the tertiary education sector through the use of hardware that is designed with learning in mind. LiteSTAT produces laboratory equipment that links to student's phones, tablets and laptops so they can have access to instrumentation for the first time. Teachers can often struggle with student engagement in technical subjects such as electrochemistry, so we offer a hands-on experience where students learn while using real world kit. The learning materials, instrument control, and data manipulation are all integrated into the same software on the student's own phone providing an intuitive experience.



TactiMat

Kathryn McDiarmid and Rona Fleming

TactiMat offers strong support and reassurance to autistic children and their parents, carers and teachers. We provide unique products that directly cater to these children's needs in situations where their behavioural anxiety can be heightened. We believe that through our passion for caring for children and education, we've created a collection of products that will support the autistic child's learning and personal development.



Neosome

Jo-Anne Tait and Colin Hetherington

Neosome is an edtech start-up designing and developing virtual worlds for education. We help people provide virtual environments that allow learners to participate in engaging simulations related to their subject. We're a team of educators who are known for our innovative approaches to higher education learning enhancement. Jo is an Academic Strategic Lead for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience in the School of Engineering, and also has a Masters in Higher Education Learning and Teaching. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), in recognition of her leadership in the enhancement of education. Colin is an elearning developer who has designed and developed virtual environments for higher education and is a Fellow of the HEA. Together they're breaking down barriers to collaboration through the use of virtual worlds.



TrackGenesis

Rajesh Kumar Plamthottahil and Jiju Mathew

TrackGenesis is a Blockchain based, AI powered software platform for the food and drink industry. Lack of transparency and trust in food supply chain is a major concern for consumers. TrackGenesis enables organisations to fully digitise their supply chain, allowing consumers to access complete product information, from its origin to the shelf within seconds using a mobile phone. Blockchain technology is used which is immutable and tamper-proof so once a transaction is written to the blockchain it can't be deleted or edited. This guarantees the integrity of the information. TrackGenesis uses encrypted and unique QR codes for every product which is impossible to recreate so helping to prevent counterfeiting. It also uses an integrated AI powered 24/7 live chat function to improve consumer engagement. TrackGenesis has been shortlisted as one of the KickStart 2019 semi-finalists, and also won the Scottish Institute for Enterprise's Fresh Ideas competition in December 2018.



Technology



Swype Global Ltd

Peter Atorough, Effe Sackey-Barnes, Frank Fotso and Solomon Onu

Swype Global Ltd is a digital company developing mobile concepts that satisfy key consumer needs in a variety of markets. An example is Swypatune, an app based music contest that exposes millions of upcoming artists to a wider audience. These artists may be left out because of their geographical location or financial and social status. Swypatune allows free, fair and remote entry into the competition and lets users vote for the artists who will go on to win a packaged price and record label. Voting is swipe based, think X Factor meets Tinder. Users are rewarded for engaging in the competition with 'swypapoints' which they can redeem from partner vendors in the app.



Dropelin

Luis Alberto Toral Quijas, Roque Tovar Martinez and Ibrahim Lawal Mohammed

We're a start-up company that is aiming to provide thermal analysis services using drones. Our objective is to provide the analysis of maintenance equipment, infrastructure, and process areas in order to assess, prevent and identify failures and possible complications. Our target is to reduce industrial failures that can lead to the loss of life, pollution of the environment, and the loss of money for our clients.



iOcean Solutions Ltd

Richard Enzmann-Horvath and Tamas Mega

Our business focuses on improving the reliability of underwater operations by helping operators to stay in control of their underwater assets. We'll achieve this by utilising subsea technology at a competitive price.



Safe Influx

Bryan Atchison and Phil Hassard

A key part of well control in the oil and gas industry is the identification of an influx whilst drilling and the consequent actions to make the well safe. For 100 years, this has been the sole responsibility of the driller. We know that up to 67% of well blowouts, where rigs are burned down and there are multiple fatalities, are caused by human factors. Advances in rig technology has allowed this process to be automated, much like flying in aircraft. Safe Influx has a product that performs automated well control on cyber rigs. There is potential for this innovation to change the way the industry drills wells, making costs cheaper and enabling more marginal fields to become profitable. We believe this innovation will save lives, reduce the potential for blowouts, save capital equipment costs, and reduce the impact on the environment.



d-Finger Ltd

Nadimal Faisal

We've developed a product that uses sensor assembled finger tips, called digital finger (d-Finger®) to sense physical surfaces. We have many years of experience assessing surface properties using various probes and sensors which record, extract, and analyse large quantities of digital data.

Digital



ArchiLink

Alistair Lea and Shehan Heguragamage

ArchiLink aims to promote innovation and independence within the architecture industry. It relates to the promotion/selling of architecture services; linking designers with potential clients. This will support younger architects who are trying to get their first onsite experience and expand their client base.



Relocate Guru

Nicole Blyth, Thomas Quiroga and Lucas Belickas

RelocateGuru is a new social platform that aims to help nearly one billion people who relocated to a new town or country last year get settled and feel part of their new community sooner. It'll be a place for you to find everything you need to know about your new neighbourhood before you move. It'll help you connect with like-minded people and find local businesses and services so everyone can feel at home anywhere.



Comparisol

Jason Iyeke

Comparisol is a mobile app that helps low-income customers learn about, compare, and purchase quality-verified solar products in Sub-Saharan Africa. It provides transparency and trust for customers, while providing solar companies with easy access to customers, reducing customer acquisition costs.



Udrafter Ltd

Daryll Morrow and Luke Morrow

Udrafter is an on-demand and real-time student work experience platform where trusted businesses can post one-off jobs, or bite-size projects, to be completed by skilled students within hours, or even minutes. It's the UK's first dedicated one-off student jobs platform that provides a wide range of different student skillsets, from digital marketing to foreign languages, all in one user-friendly platform. This saves businesses time and money, and reduces the stress levels associated with traditional on-boarding processes. Udrafter bridges the transitional skills gap between higher education and the workplace by giving students an opportunity to taste the world of work before they have even graduated.

AN ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE



By Harry Campbell, a third year Law student.

I spent my winter break supporting the UK Antarctic Trust in Antarctica. Here's a recount of my experience.

After 16 hours of flying and seven days of sailing, I finally reached the magnificent Antarctic Peninsula. The view was far beyond breathtaking, the ice and snow completely tower over the massive mountains. If you've seen the Northern Ice Wall in Game of Thrones, Antarctica is where its Southern Sister lives and I swear, her Northern little brother is just a garden fence compared to the ice walls that I saw in Antarctica.

This terrain is so dangerous. Antarctic geologists routinely carry out their surveys using only high powered binoculars from their ships because the stadium size ice blankets that cover the mountains will collapse into the sea with the slightest movement. This powerful, and at the same time, fragile continent, must be seen in person. However, it must also be deeply protected while it is studied.

One of the aims of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust is to ensure the preservation for future

generations of the historic exploration sites in Antarctica that are under their care.

Of the hundreds of icebergs I saw while on my expedition, there was one of such enormity, it would not fit in my camera focal viewfinder. I couldn't even use the panorama setting as the iceberg was just too big. To capture the entire size of it, I could only film it because it was a 14 story (45m) iceberg that was 62 square miles in size, with a further under-water depth of 905 metres. To put that into perspective, that is an iceberg that has 393,625,600 cubic metres of ice above sea level, enough ice to chill 6.396 trillion glasses of juice. Another way to compare this iceberg is you could drop the entire city of Dundee, Scotland onto it and still have room for the entire River Tay.

This was an absolutely stunning spectacle that I shall never forget, but I must remember that this is still a serious consequence of human environmental action and our reckless behaviour towards our planet's health.





This medium size iceberg is loose right now and heading north to warmer waters but there are larger ones out there as well. Our Captain informed us of the sixth largest iceberg on record, designated A-68. This iceberg broke off the Larsen C Ice shelf last year – it's a record size at 2,220 square miles which is four times the size of Greater London. Thankfully this trillion ton iceberg has stalled for now in the ice flows of the Weddall Sea which will help to prevent it from melting and raising sea levels, but only time will tell if this beast will head out to open waters.

To see the Antarctic Peninsula with my own eyes was absolutely incredible. If you were to explore Antarctica yourself, I would recommend that you first become a friend of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, or a similar organisation, as they help with insight, advice and direction to help sustain and preserve the continent.

A trip to Antarctica allows you to become a part of the history of this incredible scenic and scientific land.





Our history: John Gray

John Gray was born in a small Aberdeenshire village called Cuminestown in 1811, the sixth son of George and Ann Gray. When he was a small child, his family moved to a village near Fraserburgh where his father continued his business as a millwright and carpenter. His sons, including John, often assisted him with his business.

He moved to Aberdeen in 1830 at the age of 19 and decided to learn carpentry, building on what he picked up while working for his father. He worked for William Mackinnon and Co, a firm of engineers and ironmongers based in Spring Garden, near the current North East Scotland College. He was soon noticed by the heads of the firm and he was given a permanent job. His previous experience as a millwright saw him able to extend the business and he became a partner in 1865. Soon afterwards he became head of the firm. He maintained a keen interest in the firm, despite failing health, until within a week of his death in 1891.

In 1859, he was appointed a Director of Aberdeen Mechanics' Institution. He became a Governor of Robert Gordon's College in 1884, at the time when his School of Art was being built.

Gray's School of Art was founded in 1885 at Schoolhill. When the School opened it had 96

students enrolled in day classes and 322 for the evening ones. John Gray offered to build the school partly because of the difficulties he experienced himself in gaining adequate training. As a Director of the Mechanics' Institution, he was aware of the valuable contribution it was making to training but believed it could be delivered even more effectively in a new building designed specifically for the teaching of science and art. He originally saw it as a School of Science and Art, but it was felt that the new building wouldn't have room to house all of the scientific drawing and equipment currently held at the Mechanics' Institution, so Robert Gordon's College took over this part of the technical-education programme in 1884.

Gray's was not his only gift to Aberdeen. He was a member of the Free South Church and contributed towards the erection of its church. It's now known as St Mark's Church and stands between the Public Library and His Majesty's Theatre on Rosemount Viaduct. He also took a keen interest in the proposal to build the Public Library and was instrumental in gaining a grant to do this from industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

In 1886, as a mark of their appreciation, his fellow citizens of Aberdeen presented him with a bust. It was the work of Henry Bain, a student at Gray's and was exhibited in the vestibule of the original Schoolhill building, and now in the current building on the Garthdee campus.

He was married to Elizabeth Gordon Clark, she died in 1877 at the age of 55. John Gray died on 11 October 1891 and was buried in Nellfield Cemetery five days later.

Rev. W.M Clow paid the following tribute to John Gray:

"He was a man of exceedingly public spirit, but without that crave for prominence and outspoken acknowledgement which so often blemishes public-spirited men. He lived with the interests of our City and community continually bearing in upon his heart, and even in these later days of bodily weakness, his care for the welfare of the poor and helpless, the disadvantaged and the fallen in the battle of life never flagged. He was a strong man, strongest in his gentleness and sympathy. His stewardship of the opportunities and the wealth that God had given him was as wise in its direction as it was munificent in its liberality."

With thanks to *The Robert Gordon University: A History*, a book written by Emeritus Professor Henry Ellington.

Meet: Melissa Donald

RGView spoke to Melissa Donald, School of Engineering Programme Coordinator, to find out more about herself and some of the many things she's been involved with at RGU.



How did your career at RGU begin?

I started in a secretarial role in Univation Ltd (the then commercial arm of the University) eventually progressing to a student support role. I have since moved on to overseeing all of the postgraduate full time, online distance learning and corporate courses as well as acting as Exams Officer for the School of Engineering and supervising an administration team of five.

Do you find the work satisfying?

Over the last 20 years I have worked on the academic MSc programmes and other training courses. This has allowed me to share my experience and influence their development. I've always been involved with the MSc programmes in some way and feel very protective of them. It's satisfying and fulfilling to see them evolve and improve to where they are now.

What do you like about RGU?

There are opportunities for people in support positions, like myself, to get out from behind the desk and be seen. The opportunities the University has given me and seeing how things have come to fruition over the years is what I like about working at RGU.

What kind of opportunities?

I volunteer a lot. It's great not doing the same thing every day and a great opportunity to develop. The main thing is having the support of your line manager, who can put you forward for these roles.

I've acted as a Personal Tutor to several distance learning students, offering both academic and pastoral support. In addition, I am the School's Disability & Dyslexia Officer and have attended various internal training workshops aimed at increasing awareness of the support services available for students.

By attending these, I feel more confident in my advisee role and have met with students on a number of occasions to support them with various difficulties, which can often be of a sensitive nature. I have also become one of the University's First Responders for gender-based violence.

What advice would you give to staff looking to advance their careers?

I see continuing professional development as personal empowerment. Seek out those opportunities to develop and empower yourself.



The importance of reusing resources effectively to address society's 'make, use, dispose' culture has become an increasingly hot topic: particularly as the worldwide spotlight continues to negatively shine on plastic waste. Creating a circular economy where resources are reused for as long as possible is one solution. This might be through proactive maintenance, repair, recycling, upcycling, or even through a long-lasting original design.

At RGU, a group has been set up to investigate potential circular economy-related projects on Orkney, as part of the university's ongoing work on the islands. Kelly Fraser, Research Funding Manager is coordinating these early discussions: "The interdisciplinary group sees representation from the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen Business School, School of Engineering, and The Law School. The RGU group is looking to identify solutions to some of the challenges around handling waste on Orkney with the aim of embedding a circular economy. Initial conversations with representatives from Zero Waste Scotland and Orkney Islands Council have highlighted key priority areas which will inform the work of the group. Currently, much of the recycling has to be processed away from the islands which can be increasingly expensive and is not a sustainable solution. Sustainability is key here; being able to process plastics, waste oil, and other waste materials will help Orkney to thrive."

Project: 'Origin'

One proposal that has gained some traction is being developed by a team at Gray's School of Art. It has recently been successful in receiving support through the university's Accelerator programme. Daniel Sutherland, Academic Strategic Lead at Gray's tells us more.

"The notion of circularity within design is a common theme of interest for staff and students at Gray's," says Daniel. "Indeed, the ever-increasing media coverage of the circular economy agenda provides a growing platform for meaningful discussion. Discussion around how good design practices can be placed at the centre of plans for change in the circularity of consumer habits. However, 'circular economies' can be hard to define and difficult to 'see' at times, and the scale of initiatives that deal with circularity can make it challenging to really engage with this on a personal level.

"The circular economy theme within the relationship that RGU is currently building with Orkney is a key area of interest. Alongside my colleague Ben Durack, Lecturer, and Scott Robertson - a student on our 3D Design course - I've been working with Orkney Islands Council to consider alternative ways to re-use plastics within the islands.

"With support from the RGU Accelerator programme, we're currently progressing discussions to pilot an approach to create a 'micro-circular economy' within Orkney, in relation to plastics. This would implement prior work that we've done to test methods for breaking down single use plastics such as water bottles that have been discarded, in order to reuse the material to produce new high-quality products at the source of the collected waste. These new products are then sold back to the communities within which they were first discarded, in order to increase the circularity of consumption, whilst also reducing the need for CO2-heavy shipping of waste."

Elsewhere at RGU

Another good example of a circular economy within the university is RGU Go Green. The initiative promotes sustainability to students and staff and aims to 'spread the word about environmental topics and provide tools, opportunities, and training, to empower individuals to look after the planet'. It's run by volunteers and coordinates the BikePad, a rent and repair scheme for bikes; the Kaim Shop, allowing you to donate and take donations; the organic VegBag scheme, providing healthy and affordable fruit and veg; and also the LivEco Café, located at the Ruthrieston Community Centre.

The Fashion & Textile Design course addresses issues around the circular economy of fashion at all stages. The need for design students to fully understand their responsibilities as future designers is strongly endorsed. This includes understanding the supply chain, where their materials originate from, and the importance of their own design's longevity. Two examples of this work are The Garment Project at stage one which highlights issues around our disposable fashion culture, and the School's active involvement in the [Fashion Revolution Day](#), a national event encouraging awareness of clothing manufacture.

Staff are also engaged in collaborative research across the university that specifically addresses issues around this theme. Josie Steed, Course Leader for Fashion & Textiles is working as part of a research team with Yang Jiang, School of Computing Science and Digital Media, and Karen Cross, School of Creative and Cultural Business, in an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded UK-China project. The project has industry partners and academics in Shanghai and Scotland to explore ways to educate consumers towards a slow fashion principle, valuing sustainability, craftsmanship, heritage, and the value of traditional fashion and textile products (both Scottish and Chinese). This uses immersive technologies, such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and mixed reality.



TEAM FOCUS: ACCESS AND ARTICULATION

Breaking down barriers

The Access and Articulation team, located within the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA) delivers the university's widening participation initiative, ACCESS RGU. They work in partnership across the university, and with external partners, to improve access to higher education for those from society's most disadvantaged communities. They also provide a range of support services for students to break down barriers to accessing higher education, and core activities include:

School outreach – The School's Engagement Team works with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire schools to develop an outreach programme that is inclusive and impactful in engaging young learners and raising aspiration towards studying at university.

Access To - Each year over 200 local pupils from S5 and S6 participate in the university's 'Access To' courses. This well-established programme provides pupils with a choice of nine different subject areas, giving participants valuable insight into university study and future career decisions.

College - Each year over 400 students graduate from college and come to study at RGU, making up nearly a quarter of our first year undergraduate population. Through collaboration with partner colleges, the College Engagement Team is able to support these students to make the transition to RGU as successful as possible.

Care leavers - Going to university is a fresh and exciting chapter in someone's life, but it can also be a daunting prospect. In many cases, a disrupted education or lack of family support may make the transition to university more demanding for care-experienced individuals so dedicated support is provided to these students, from application to graduation and beyond.

Scholarships – ACCESS RGU offers a range of scholarships for those in the most need, with financial support backed up with study skills assistance and career guidance.



Connor Anderson, Gary Dawson, Jade Gilbert, Daniel Mutch, Eileen Spence, Brian Webb and Melanie Farquhar.

Meet the Team

Brian Webb, Access Pathways Lead

Brian leads the team and this involves coordinating the portfolio of wider access activity with schools, colleges and communities. He is responsible for engaging with external partners at regional and national level, to shape decision making and generate benefits for learners. He's been a practicing Community Education Worker since qualifying in 1996 and has held a number of management posts across Scotland, including at Children First and Youth Scotland. When he moved to Aberdeen 15 years ago he was a Community Worker in the Tillydrone Community Centre, then moved to Barnados, and then to Station House Media Unit (SHMU) to lead their employability project for ten years.

Gary Dawson, School Engagement Lead

Gary recently joined the university to lead the School Engagement Team. He's responsible for building and developing effective relationships with internal and external partners, to deliver a comprehensive Schools Outreach programme. He has 15 years of management experience and a lifetime of work within community work, social work and community media.

Connor Anderson, Project Officer

Connor has recently joined as Project Officer for the School Engagement Team. He's responsible for coordinating the schools outreach programmes and supporting young people who meet the university's wider access criteria. He recently moved across from RGU's Student life team where he was the ResLife Coordinator.

Jade Gilbert, Youth Engagement Assistant

Jade recently joined the team as Youth Engagement Assistant for the School Engagement Team. She helps to deliver the school outreach programmes and support young people who meet the university's wider access criteria. She was involved in the Access to Creative Education in Scotland (ACES) programme at RGU while at school, so she brings a unique, first-hand perspective of the programme and the journey the university seeks to support. She's hoping to use her experience to pay it forward and support young individuals in the same way that she was supported throughout her university journey.

Melanie Farquhar, College Engagement Lead

Melanie has worked in the team for six years and was recently appointed the College Engagement Lead. She's responsible for developing effective relationships with internal and external partners to develop articulation links and support transitioning students.

Daniel Mutch, Project Officer

Daniel recently joined as Project Officer for the College Engagement Team. He's responsible for coordinating and delivering a range of projects to develop articulation and support transitioning students. He previously worked in the university's Student Accommodation and Timetabling teams.

Eileen Spence, Administrator

Eileen has recently joined the team as Administrator. She's responsible for providing administrative support to ensure the team effectively delivers its core activities. Previously, she worked as a Work Coach with the Department of Work and Pensions.

A STEP CHANGE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING



As the higher education landscape evolves to reflect the ways technology is shaping society, universities need to develop their curriculum to ensure they continue to meet demand and enable greater access to programmes. RGU's pioneering work in Graduate Apprenticeships (GA) is a good example of this; bringing the classroom to the workplace, and extending access to degree-level study.

"This commitment to extending the reach of relevant curriculum has recently seen the university awarded a further 180 fully-funded GA places," says Julie Strachan, Head of Learning and Teaching Development, DELTA. "This builds on RGU's earlier GA achievements, consolidating our position as a major provider of GAs for Scotland. The current RGU GA offering spans a wide range of disciplines, including Business Management, Construction, Engineering, Finance, and IT. The range of RGU's existing GA courses will be further expanded in September 2019, as RGU becomes the only university in Scotland to offer a GA in Accounting. Forty places will be available to learners who, upon successful completion of the programme, will be fully qualified members of either the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) or the Association of Chartered Certified Accounts (ACCA). Fifteen places will also be available on our new GA in Data Science, allowing RGU to equip individuals working at the forefront of this rapidly evolving field. It's great to see us making real progress and contributions to the GA landscape, and the recent award of places is a credit to all of the teams involved."

RGView spoke to some mentors and mentees who are taking part in an RGU GA to understand how the programme has so far impacted their careers.

Aberdeen Football Club

Mentee - Lee Forsyth

"I'm currently in my first year of the IT with Business Management GA. I decided to do the RGU GA because the style of the degree suited my lifestyle better. The role is extremely varied as we are a small team of three and have to support many systems. My main responsibilities include the support function of the department, project management on small to medium projects and match day support. To be able to study towards a degree while learning on the job is invaluable. The staff at the club and RGU have been incredibly supportive throughout my experience so far."

Mentor - David Bowman

"I've worked at AFC for 23 years and have been in the IT Manager role since 2003. I'm really pleased to be able to support Lee throughout the course of his GA. I think there are definitely benefits for the employer. It helps us with development opportunities for our staff to gain graduate-level qualifications, by applying their developed knowledge and skills directly into the workplace. This work-based learning definitely benefits the apprentice too, and it's also not as time-demanding as other study methods, helping to manage the work-life balance."



Interview with mentor David Bowman



Interview with mentee Lee Forsyth



Sparrows Group

Mentee – Kirsty Buchan

"I've been working at Sparrows Group for four years, after taking part in its modern apprenticeship scheme. I'm now in the first year of a Business Management GA. It has been a challenge at times, but it has been great. I feel like I'm actually reading a lot more and writing a lot more than I was before – and I'm also able to put everything I'm learning into practice immediately as part of my day job. I would definitely recommend the GA scheme to others, especially those who left school and don't have a formal degree. It's a chance to get back into it and work and learn at the same time."

Mentor – Andrew Dey

"I'm the Design Services Manager for the UK at Sparrows Group and I've taken on the role of mentor to support our apprentices to gain the knowledge and skills they need to be a success in the workplace. I heard about the GA scheme through our internal training and development team and since then we've worked together closely to work out exactly how apprentices can gain the experience they need to meet their objectives. I believe that in theory there should be benefits for both the apprentice and the employer. It's a positive step change in the workplace and there should be some good results on site."

The European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC)



Image: Colin Keldie

Mentee – Cath Russell

"I'm currently taking part in a Business Management GA and I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to gain a degree and keep working. This course gives me the flexibility to do both. I'm really enjoying learning the theory behind what I do in practice. I'm finding that applying the theory to my own company is really helpful, it makes it more real if I can see it in action. I think I learn better by doing, so being able to practically use my learning in my day to day job is great. Being in a class with others from different companies helps as I hear about other sectors and how their practice is similar or differs from mine. I can work through the online materials at times that suit me, which means I can fit it in with family life and so far, it seems to be working well. The tutors are always on hand to answer any queries and the forums give us all a chance to discuss things."

Uncovered: Graduate Apprenticeship

RGU is one of the largest providers of Graduate Apprenticeships in Scotland. It was the first university in Scotland to approve the delivery of GAs, with two initially introduced: IT Management for Business, and Software Development, helping to address national skills needs. The university has continued to be successful in expanding its offering, currently offering eight GA courses. Places on these courses are offered in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, and with support from the European Social Fund.

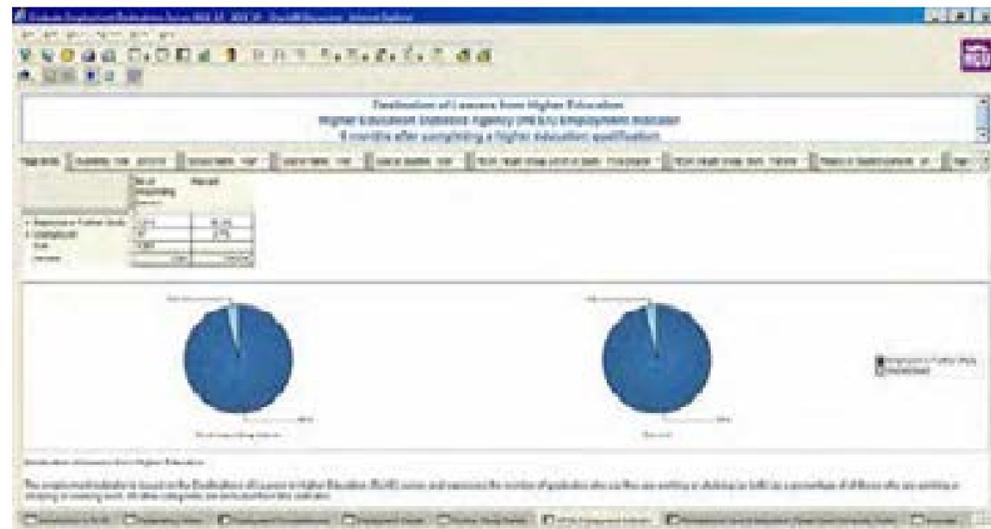
RGU's approach to work-based learning, and specifically GAs, involves a truly collaborative effort across many academic schools and support departments, as well as extensive engagement with industry and professional bodies. This innovative model reflects the importance of RGU's approach in engaging employers in curriculum design, extending this to encompass the employer as a co-facilitator of learning throughout the degree course, and identifying the workplace as the primary learning environment.

GAs bring benefits not just to apprentices, but also to their employers. Employers benefit in a number of ways: from feeding their talent pipeline to meet current and future skills needs in a new way; to developing existing staff with emerging and transferable skill sets, and improving employee retention and satisfaction by supporting and investing in their development.

The Business Intelligence project

By Alison Watson, Implementation Manager

Many of you will have heard about the Business Intelligence (BI) project, some of you will have even used the new tool, RGU:Insight. This project is just one of many rolled out to enhance the university's digital infrastructure. This article gives you a look into the project's purpose and the benefits it brings to data analysis.



Before - FALSE DATA



After - FALSE DATA

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to enable evidence based decision making at an operational and strategic level to enhance the ability to meet our strategic aims. It does this through the implementation of new software tools, which connect with our data and provide user-friendly visualisations to aid analysis. The project is run by a small team based in the Planning and Policy Department, but the team engages with a very wide range of staff across the university when planning and implementing new views of data.

Actions

The project's first priority is to provide staff with easy to analyse data relating to our students, most of which is collected and stored on the SITS database. The project is working on replacing the current 'front end' means of interrogating and reporting with the new software. The most significant area of work that has been completed to date is in the new visualisations that have been designed to support the annual course appraisal process. This involves data spanning the students' time at university: enrolment; progression; attainment; satisfaction; and employment and/or further study.

To the left is an example of the previous report on employment and/or further study six months after graduation (false data) and of the new report (false data) to give you an idea of the difference:

Key points:

- Capability to present several 'cuts' of data on one view
- Easy to access and to move between dashboards
- Easy to compare performance at university, school, course and (where applicable) module level
- First time that we can show the performance of particular population characteristics against the total population
- Easy to identify key trends and messages through use of symbols to indicate (for example) where performance has met target and where there are year on year changes
- Use of trendlines to give a snapshot of performance over time

Feedback from users of RGU:Insights has been very positive:



"The RGU:Insight development changed the course appraisal process dramatically for me. Information was easy to access and presented in ways that meant I could see immediately where courses were performing well and where additional attention was needed. I found the dashboards to be very easy to use and I am looking forward to future developments."

Dr Mark Zarb, Course Leader, School of Computing and Digital Media

It also indicates that Heads of School and those responsible for considering the School level reports have noticed a real improvement in the quality of responses, which improves the process overall and will lead to improvements in student experience:

"As a Head of School, I can report that the new development of data and visualisations on RGU:Insight had a really positive impact on the way staff approached the course appraisal this year and the analysis and reflection has improved as a result. This will result in positive changes for our students."

Jo Royle, Head of the School of Creative and Cultural Business



"The RGU:Insight workbooks have had a significant impact on the quality of this year's annual appraisal process. Using the Insight workbooks allows those of us who are responsible for assessing the responses to ensure that the key issues are identified and addressed. This results in a more rigorous appraisal process that will improve the experience of our students."

Professor Liz Hancock, Vice Principal, Academic Development and Student Experience

Next steps

The project is working on supporting other key university business processes, with work on applications and enrolments underway. Alongside this, the project will move from student data to other internal data sources.

Meet the team

The Business Intelligence Project Team is led by Alison Watson and there are three Business Intelligence Analysts, Graham Bruce, Iain Middleton and Duncan Stonebridge. For more information please contact [Alison Watson](#), Implementation Manager.



Iain Middleton, Duncan Stonebridge, Graham Bruce, and Alison Watson

Improving the student experience



Each year, new partnership objectives are agreed to allow RGU Union and the university to develop tangible improvements to the student experience together. Last year's objectives were to develop the student voice and to explore resilience and wellbeing, which have all been improved through collaboration between staff and students.

Union Presidents and Vice Presidents, School Officers, International Representatives, Equality Champions and more than 400 Student Representatives elected across the university work in partnership with staff to represent students' open, honest and constructive opinions.

To develop the student voice, the partnership focused on improving engagement with the annual Student Experience Questionnaire and National Student Survey to ensure any enhancements made were formed from rich evidence. Eighty six percent of students taking part indicated that they have the right opportunities to provide feedback on their course.

New school-based student representative training was launched to provide greater context and networking opportunities for the representatives, 98 percent of whom indicated they would recommend the training to others.

To explore resilience and wellbeing, a new Student Mental Health Agreement was formed with five objectives to raise awareness and promote positive wellbeing among staff and students. These objectives were formed with guidance from the National Union of Students Scotland and can be found in full on the mental health pages of RGU Union's website. A Positive Wellbeing Group is a committee formed with strong student involvement to support the implementation of the agreement.

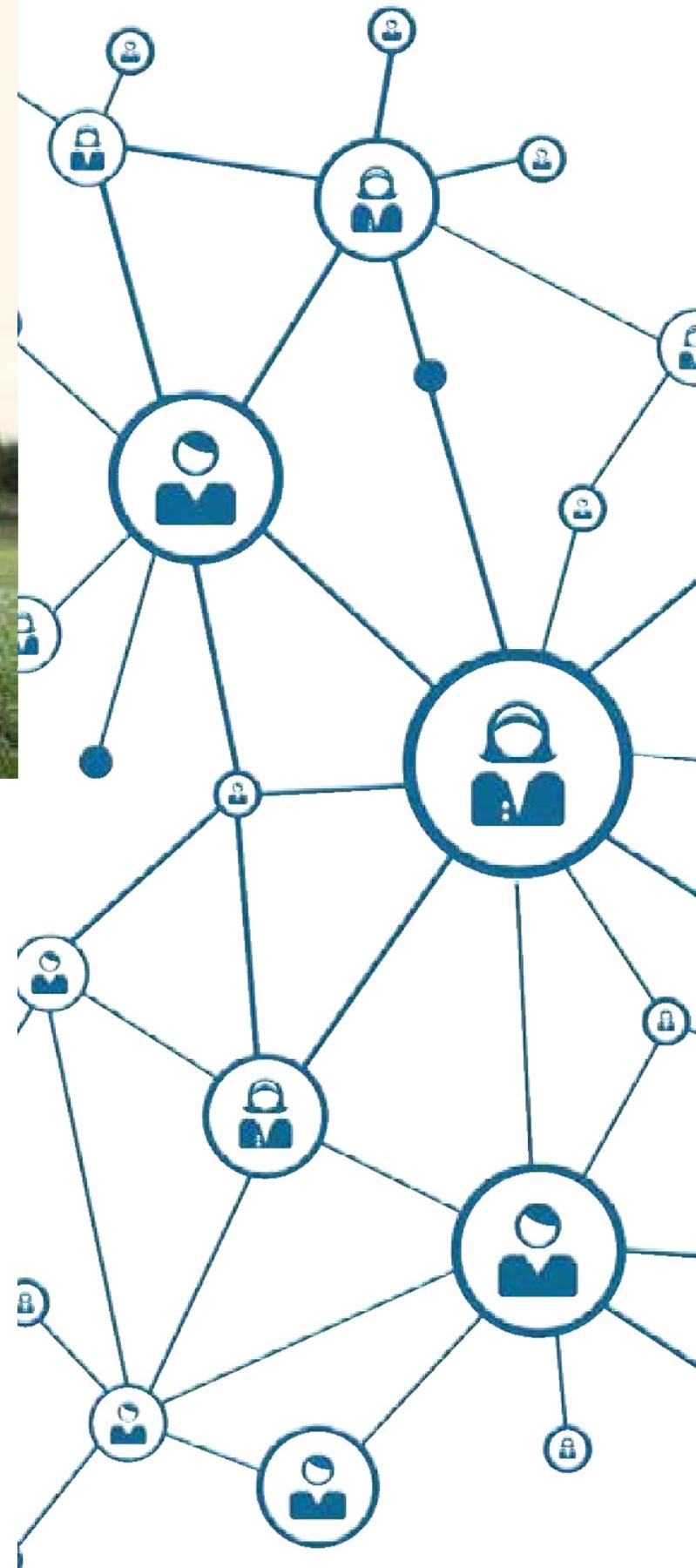
Student President for Education & Welfare Adam James Johnston says: "Student Life, Union, Counselling, student groups, and others make up this committee. We look at our Student Mental Health Agreement as a framework to guide our plans around early intervention mechanisms,

improving support services, normalising the conversation around mental health, and much much more."



The approach has three main aspects: listening to your feedback, partnership in action, and achieved in partnership.

The objectives that Partnership at RGU will focus on throughout the next year are the students' experiences of distance learning and students' involvement in enhancements to campus services. You don't need to wait for formal meetings to get involved in bettering the university. Head to the [Partnership at RGU](#) pages and find out how best to share your open, honest and constructive opinion on these two objectives.



CIRCLES: STAFF NETWORKS

RGU is fortunate to have a diverse range of groups and networks available to its staff. While completely voluntary to create, lead or attend, they are beneficial to the university by having a positive impact on its culture and community. They're an opportunity to meet new people, share information, pursue your interests and support each other.

Circles is a new and recurring feature that invites you to learn more about one of these groups or networks. In this issue, we focus on...

The Resilience & Development Network

The network launched in 2015 and focuses on supporting staff in conversation with students about mental health and wellbeing. It does this through monthly meet ups designed to spread the expertise and knowledge already available within the university community to raise awareness and encourage discussions about mental health. The Resilience & Development Network is run by Inclusion Coordinators Julie Waddell and Jonathan Walker.

Julie says: "By making staff more confident in the subject of resilience and by giving them a platform to talk about mental health and wellbeing, they can more confidently encourage students to talk about those same topics. In this way, the expertise and knowledge shared through the network can be trickled down to support students as and when they need it through teaching."

The monthly meet ups cover a range of topics, which more recently included gender-based violence, isolation and loneliness, common thinking errors, and how to find 'solid ground' in the face of an overwhelming task. You don't have to be a member to attend the meetings and no preregistration is necessary, although a [mailing list is available](#).

Staff can join the network and mailing list to find out about future meet ups, or they can head to the [Resilience and Development Moodle page](#) for more information.

Moments

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 news section of the [RGU website](#).



Placements and professional links that weave employability into the School of Health Sciences' courses are creating practice-ready graduates who positively [contribute to the health of society](#).



The 20 Engineering and Business students that make up the new RGU Racing Student Association will take on teams from across the globe in their first foray into [Formula Student racing](#).



Watch: ten members of the RGU community share why they [proudly wear their rainbow lanyards](#).



[Life on Marathon Oil's Brae Bravo platform has been captured](#) for posterity by a team of talented photography students to mark the end of production on the installation.



Alumna Dr Jenna Ross became one the top Master of Business Administration (MBA) students in the world after being shortlisted in the Association of MBA's [global student of the year award](#).



RGU and Fife College partner to provide students with greater flexibility and more affordable options for study by completing the first one to two years of their degree locally at college before progressing [through Degree Link](#).



The Bio-therapeutics Hub for Innovation in Aberdeen has secured a £20m investment and is set to double the number of life sciences companies in North East Scotland while supporting the sector to collaborate, innovate and commercialise the [next generation of therapies and healthcare solutions](#).

NSS

National Student Survey

HAVE
YOUR
SAY

WWW.THESTUDENTSURVEY.COM

Take part in the National Student Survey and help shape the future of RGU. It's quick to complete and you'll also be helping prospective students choose where and what to study.

If you are studying on a course leading to undergraduate credits or qualifications and are in your final year, you may be eligible for the NSS. Visit thestudentsurvey.com to find out.