

# QMYOU

MAGAZINE

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF  
QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY  
Issue 88 | MARCH 2021



**Celebrating 50 years of drama  
& 75 years of speech**

**QMU rises to the  
challenges of the pandemic**

**A Craighang catch-up  
with Tam and Isa**



**Queen Margaret  
University**  
EDINBURGH





## Principal's Welcome

**T**HERE IS NO denying that the last year has been one of the most challenging periods in the history of Queen Margaret University. Like all universities, we have had to move quickly to adapt our teaching methods - students now benefit from our blended learning approach which involves a mix of face-to-face teaching and online learning. We have also had to reshape how we offer student support, run our commercial operations and undertake our research. Every part of the University's operations has been impacted by the pandemic, yet we continue to deliver - preparing students for the world of work, supporting our communities, driving forward important research, and focusing our activity on making a real difference to the world around us.

I am deeply impressed at the resilience, and the passion and determination of QMU staff, students and graduates who contribute in a positive way to society. This edition of the magazine pays tribute to each and every member of the University's community who has used their skills, knowledge and time to help our communities in coping with and recovering from the pandemic. The first part of this magazine shares some of these stories. Our feature focusing on our response to the pandemic helps to demonstrate the important place that QMU inhabits, not only in the community, but in UK higher education and indeed the world at large.

In this most challenging of years, we are delighted to bring some much needed positivity. Our magazine not only focuses on the great work of our students, graduates and staff, it celebrates our history, acknowledges our present, and looks with confidence towards our future. We take this opportunity to share some significant milestones with you. This edition celebrates two anniversaries - 50 years of drama and 75 years of speech sciences. We have a proud history of education in these specialist areas, and are pleased that some of our graduates and staff have agreed to share their experiences and career stories with us.

Like me, I know you'll love hearing from our alumni, including Hollywood actor Kevin McKidd, and Jane McCarry and Mark Cox, AKA Isa and Tam, stars of the immensely popular TV sitcom 'Still Game'. We are also proud to celebrate the success of rising star and BAFTA winner Gbemisola Ikumelo, who is fast becoming one of the leading comedy performers of her generation.

I hope you enjoy reading this celebratory edition as much as I have, and find inspiration from some of our news stories, features and interviews. If you are a graduate, please continue to connect with the University through our alumni office at E: alumni@qmu.ac.uk and if you are a member of the public or are already connected with the University, please consider talking to our Development team on E: development@qmu.ac.uk about different ways you can support our work.

With very best wishes

Sir Paul Grice FRSE, FAcSS

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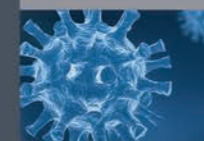
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Some of the articles featured in this magazine are available online at:  
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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## QMU recognised in world university rankings

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME, Queen Margaret University features in the QS World University Rankings, ranked in the top 70% of universities in the world.

Now in their 17th year, the QS World University Rankings are considered the world's most consulted source of comparative information about university performance. □

## World's first master's in mad studies

**T**HE WORLD'S FIRST master's degree in mad studies is now being offered by the University. Primarily a course for graduates with lived experience of mental health issues, the new MSc Mad Studies has been hailed as the most exciting piece of curriculum development in the last 20 years!

Mad studies is a recognised academic discipline that explores the knowledge and actions that have grown from the global mad movement. It cuts across the fields of social sciences, healthcare and humanities and expresses a radical new voice in academia about madness.

Dr Elaine Ballantyne, Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy at QMU, explained: "This is an important development that recognises mad studies as an academic discipline, and the important contribution that the mad community can make to the generation of knowledge about madness.

"At the core of mad studies, we should have mad people, mad issues and mad culture. QMU is keen to push academic boundaries and we are passionate about social justice, equality of opportunity and person-centred learning.

"We can't wait to engage with students, who want to learn how mad studies can meaningfully contribute to social justice and change." □

## New website dedicated to LGBT+

**I**N RECENT MONTHS, QMU has created a section of its website which is dedicated to supporting people from its LGBT+ community.

The University is deeply committed to equality and diversity, and part of that commitment is to create a welcoming environment on campus and online for all staff and students. Particularly for new students moving away from home for this first time, it can be a daunting prospect making new friends and settling in to a new life. It's important that everyone feels welcome and has good access to social and support networks.

The new area of the website helps the LGBT+ community find out about access to the LGBT+ Student Society, LGBT+ Staff Network, and well as support, wellbeing and counselling services. Find out more at: [www.qmu.ac.uk/lgbt](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/lgbt) □



## New course to advance practice in the care home sector

**A** NEW COURSE which will help to improve care and advance professional practice within the care home sector has been launched by QMU's Division of Nursing.

The new initiative responds to the need for an improvement in multidisciplinary education opportunities which are specific to the care home sector and which are suitable for a range of experienced practitioners, whether they be in clinical, leadership, management or development roles.

Dr Caroline Dickson, Programme Leader for the new PgDip Person-centred Practice: Advancing Care Home Practice at QMU, explained: "Education provision that is specific to the care home sector is an area of learning that has been sadly neglected. One of the most important things about this new course is that it recognises care home practice as a specialism in its own right.

"There are an incredible range of professionals all working across the care home sector. Multidisciplinary teams made up of nurses, care workers, allied health professionals, managers, chaplains and social workers all make an important contribution to the overall success of service provision and management. But to be truly successful, it is critical that everyone is involved in creating person-centred cultures which allow people, both living and working within the care homes, to flourish."

Dr Dickson concluded: "We have taken a multidisciplinary approach to developing this new course by collaborating with professionals in care homes; business; nursing; and palliative and community settings. We hope this unique course will build morale amongst staff who are able to benefit from excellent development opportunities, whilst also improving quality standards and leadership across the care home sector." □

## Award-winning mental health book distributed across Scotland

**'THE RECOVERY LETTERS'**, a collection of writings from people who have recovered, or are in the process of recovering from depression, was included as part of a mental health kit issued across Scotland. The kits were distributed by Time to Tackle, a football-based support initiative.

Edited by Dr Olivia Sagan, QMU's Head of Psychology, Sociology and Education, and James Withey, the book is an anthology of letters from people of all ages and from all walks of life who have struggled with depression and have set out on the road to recovery through the cathartic power of writing.

The Recovery Letters was chosen as a World Book Night title in 2018 and is on the Reading Agency's list for mental health reading. Cosmopolitan magazine also named it one of '12 Mental Health Books Everyone Should Read'.

The idea for the project resulted from Withey's battle with depression after he was unable to find any personal accounts of the recovery and management of the condition while in residence in a psychiatric hospital, as well as Dr Sagan's longitudinal research with mentally ill adults learning how to write.

Dr Sagan said: "We hope that the personal accounts included within the collection provide a sense of comfort and support for those who are living with mental ill-health during the particularly challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic." □

## Swapping the classroom for woodland adventures

**L**IGHTING OUTDOOR FIRES, building bug houses and baking bread over a campfire have resulted in students moving out of their traditional classrooms on campus and into an inspiring woodland setting in Musselburgh.

Thanks to a new partnership with the National Trust for Scotland, students on QMU's Initial Teacher Education courses are enjoying the chance to develop outdoor skills in an open-air learning zone in the stunning grounds of Newhailes House and Gardens. Read about the development of QMU's outdoor learning work on page 12 and 13. □

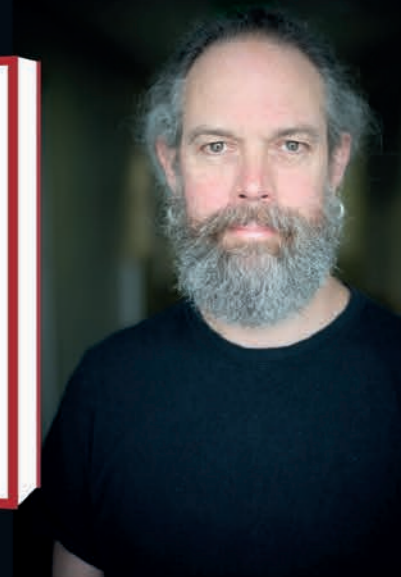
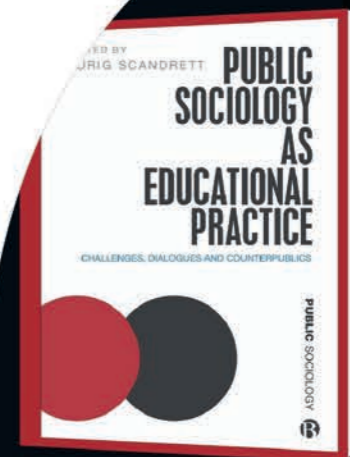
## New film module launched

**T**EACHERS WHO WANT to use film as part of their classroom teaching will now be able to embark on a film module with QMU.

The Professional Practice in Film Education is perfect for teachers who want to incorporate film into their teaching practice, as well as individuals who already have experience in teaching moving image education, but who are keen to advance their skills.

As Scotland seeks to develop its screen industries, it is becoming increasingly important to encourage young people to express themselves through the medium of film, and develop their screen practice from a young age.

Dr Robert Munro, Lecturer in Film and Media at QMU, said: "We're delighted to be delivering this new module in conjunction with Screen Scotland. We hope that the course will provide a platform to consolidate existing knowledge and begin to build a framework of best practice in film education across Scotland." □



## Short course for third sector linked to publication of public sociology book

**Q**MU HAS INTRODUCED a Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) in public sociology aimed at workers, volunteers and activists in the third sector, at the same time as publishing an acclaimed new book on public sociology. With contributions from academics, graduates and students from QMU and other universities, and third sector organisations, 'Public Sociology as Educational Practice' is deemed to be a 'must-read' for sociologists, educationalists, students, and community and social movement activists. It also provides a core text for QMU's postgraduate certificate programme.

The PgCert Public Sociology provides an opportunity for those involved in community action and social movements to learn relevant social analysis. It explores how social analysis contributes to a range of professional, community action and social movement practices and encourages students to reflect systematically on the relationship between practice and theory in their current and future work in the community, voluntary and public sector. The course draws extensively on the experience of QMU and other academics, which is published in Public Sociology as Educational Practice.

Dr Eurig Scandrett, Senior Lecturer in Public Sociology at QMU and Programme Leader for the PgCert Public Sociology, edited the new book. He said: "We are at a critical point where society is experiencing rapid change and an escalation of inequality. There has never been a more interesting or important time for people to engage with the subject of public sociology and to use new learning to fight for social justice. We hope this book, which embodies public sociology as a radical education, will be a thought provoking resource for students, academics and practitioners."

The book launch coincided with the launch of QMU's new 10 week PgCert Public Sociology, which started in early 2021. Course details are available on the QMU website at [www.qmu.ac.uk](http://www.qmu.ac.uk). □





# RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

## How the QMU community is making a difference

**PROVIDING PROVISIONS FOR the local community during lockdown, bolstering the NHS at the height of the pandemic, cooking healthy meals for low income families and conducting essential coronavirus research have all been part of QMU's response to the global pandemic.**

Good things can come out of bad situations, but there is no denying that 2020 was a shocker of a year.

No-one could have envisaged all of the challenges that the pandemic would bring. However, if we look back at QMU's history, we have a reputation as a trailblazing institution which has tackled some of the most pressing issues facing society. In 1875, the institution grew out of the need to address two important areas – the diet of the urban poor, and educational and career opportunities for

women. Our mission, right from the onset, has been to make a difference, and we have a proud history of serving the community and working to improve lives.

Over the years, we have remained true to our roots. Our core values have prepared us well to rise to some of the challenges created by COVID-19, and our tremendous sense of purpose has propelled the QMU community to work tirelessly in its efforts to improve the world around us.

There have been huge obstacles along the way, but making a positive contribution is part of QMU's DNA. It's what makes us tick. We are delighted to be able to share some of our stories to give you a flavour of the ways in which our incredible students, graduates, staff and supporters have contributed to the national effort in responding to the global pandemic. □



### Health students drop everything to support the NHS

**S**uddenly, it was all go! While the rest of us were getting used to working from home, QMU's healthcare students took up the charge, responding to urgent calls from the Scottish Government to join Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) emergency registers. Before the end of semester, students from QMU's Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Therapeutic Radiography, Diagnostic Radiography, Speech & Language Therapy, Dietetics and Podiatry were catapulted into positions in the NHS and social care settings.

What's even more incredible is that each and every one of the University's fourth-year health sciences students who was eligible to register with the HCPC wasted no time in doing so. Even though these are uncertain times for everyone, QMU healthcare students have risen to the occasion and continue to play a vital role in the rehabilitation of those recovering from COVID-19.

Any thoughts of holidays or graduation celebrations were quickly replaced with more pressing issues such as relocation plans and role preparation. It would be a career start like no other, but

without hesitation, the University and students worked together to help the new starts quickly slot into healthcare roles across the country.

One of the many QMU students who suddenly found themselves contributing to the national effort was physiotherapist Sophie McAuliffe, who back in April, said: "There is going to be a greater role for physiotherapists in the coming weeks and months because people who become unwell with COVID-19 will not only need us while they are sick, but afterwards too as they begin rehabilitation.

"Starting work in this field in the midst of a global pandemic is going to be a challenge, but it's one I think QMU has equipped us for."

Outside of the School of Health Sciences, QMU students have found other ways to help the NHS in the fight against the virus. A prime example of this is the 'Race Around the World' challenge, hosted by the Men's Rugby team and run in collaboration with all QMU sports clubs and societies. Open to the whole University community, participants were tasked with running 40,000km collectively (equivalent to 34 cities across 30 different countries), tracking their progress using the exercise monitoring app Strava, with sponsorship money going to NHS Charities Together. □





## Lewis branded local hero for Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts initiative

It's heart-warming when QMU students get the recognition they deserve, and Lewis MacLachlan certainly touched the hearts of many with his selfless efforts to cater for people in need during the pandemic.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, Lewis, a former chef, was studying towards his MSc Gastronomy at QMU, but as we moved into lockdown, he put his studies on hold to set up Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts. This volunteer-led initiative uses furloughed or redundant chefs in empty or unused kitchens, who divert surplus food from restaurants and businesses and transform it into healthy daily meal packs.

The healthy packs are then delivered to people who have been shielding, isolating or living in poverty. The initiative helps ensure that people who are most in need receive daily deliveries of healthy meals on a free, non-judgemental basis.

Lewis's selfless efforts to respond to the crisis and fight food poverty were recognised by the Edinburgh Local Heroes Awards, run by the Evening News. At the online award ceremony, he was named Health Champion of the Year. However, the judges felt his efforts were worthy of the top accolade and presented him with the Local Hero Award.

To date, Lewis's Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts initiative has provided over 500,000 meals to people all over Edinburgh on a non-judgmental and non-profit basis. □



## Supporting the local community

The issue of where to buy flour and toilet rolls was a hot topic on community social media sites during lockdown. When supermarket shelves were bare, the local community could always rely on BaxterStorey, catering services partner at QMU, to provide essentials for students and local residents. At one point, Maggie's Bar and Café at QMU's Students' Union, was almost the only place in Musselburgh where locals could lay their hands on self-raising flour!

But staff from BaxterStorey didn't just look after the catering needs of the immediate QMU community, the team worked tirelessly supporting various charities and community groups during the most challenging of times. Along with the Students' Union, ResLife and the University's UCU branch, they put together over a hundred wellbeing packs for students in University accommodation. They also supported the social enterprise Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, to provide over 1000 packs of soup for people in need. One of the BaxterStorey chefs covered shifts in the kitchens of a local residential home, while the company's manager collaborated with Resilient Musselburgh to help create access to essential provisions for those who required urgent assistance. □

## Partnership working makes all the difference



The power of partnership working should never be underestimated, particularly during times of crisis. QMU values the strong and trusting relationships it has with its supporters, and we were delighted that one of our most impactful donors, Santander Universities, immediately stepped up and repurposed £35,000 funding to support our students who were experiencing financial hardship due to the pandemic.

The organisation also provided £50,000 to both QMU and Edinburgh Napier University to supply thank you gifts to 1,400 students who helped the NHS in the fight against COVID-19.

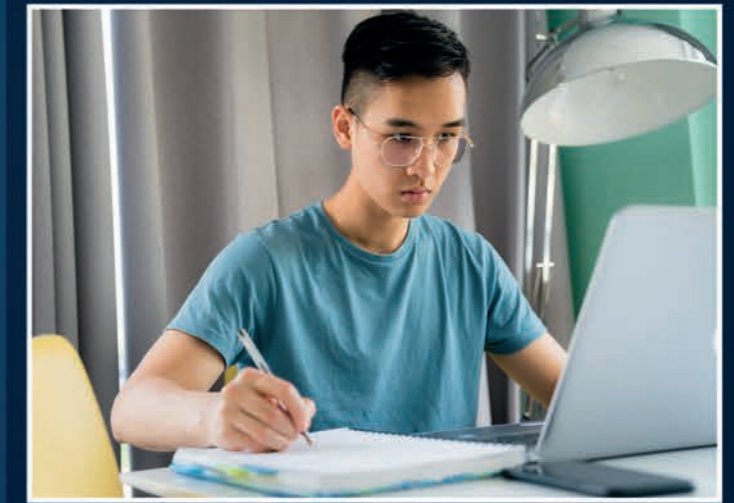
QMU's Nursing and Allied Health Professional students were able to apply to receive a luxury hamper full of delicious Scottish produce. The hampers were created by David McVey, a graduate of QMU's MSc Gastronomy and owner of Edinburgh's Artisan Larder Scotland.

David said: "We have loved making up the hampers and hearing back from students who have enjoyed the selection of gifts including a range of Scottish cheeses, Edinburgh Honey, Tobermory trout and locally produced tea, coffee, biscuits, and preserves. We wanted to make them feel extraordinary and we are thankful that this support package has contributed to our business and allowed us to do something special for others who are playing a critical part in the country's recovery."

Coming from a family of nurses, David's mother and sister have both worked on the frontline during the pandemic. He confirmed: "I am grateful to all the nurses and healthcare professionals who are at risk everyday so that we can be safe. I hope our hampers provided a little respite."

This initiative was part of a much larger Santander COVID-19 emergency support package at QMU, totalling over £75,000. The additional funding was used to support student start-up businesses and other students who were facing financial hardship due to the pandemic.

QMU is indebted to Santander for all it has done to support our students during these unprecedented times. □



## Tutoring initiative helps pupils catch up with learning lost during lockdown

Over lockdown, education authorities became aware that many school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds had fallen behind in their learning.

There are many reasons why a young person may have struggled to keep up with schooling, but mental health problems, poverty and caring responsibilities could be some of the reasons why their families were also unable to cope.

The MCR Pathways Lockdown Survey 1 of disadvantaged and care-experienced young people found that 68% of those surveyed had done no school work during lockdown. Without urgent intervention, it was feared that pupils in East Lothian may never catch up – putting them at significant disadvantage in both the short and long term.

In response to this crisis, QMU joined forces with the STV Children's Appeal, East Lothian Council and a local family charity, to launch the East Lothian Tutoring Initiative. The project is supporting S4 – S6 pupils in all six secondary schools across the county.

Callum Maguire, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach at QMU, is passionate about closing the attainment gap and supporting young people to achieve their potential no matter what their background. He said: "We are delighted that the STV Children's Appeal and a local family charity is financing our delivery of online tutoring which will provide one-to-one support for senior years' school pupils."

The initiative has also created jobs; young graduates, who may have struggled to secure employment due to the pandemic, have been employed as tutors to support the school pupils in key areas of their learning.

Thomas Kelly, Head of Development and Alumni Relations at QMU, said: "The East Lothian Tutoring Initiative is showcasing an area of work which has never been done before on this scale, and we are excited to see the immediate impact on individuals, as well as the longer term learning outcomes.

"Without the incredible support from our two major donors we would be unable to tackle the inequalities facing some of our younger population, and provide them with the fighting chance that they deserve." □

## Sweet surprise for NHS staff

Across the UK, people gained a newfound respect for our NHS. As a nation we were desperate to thank them for their efforts and support their resilience as essential frontline workers in the battle to save lives.

To show her gratitude, one International Management and Leadership graduate was instrumental in securing a donation of 60,000 sweet treats for frontline healthcare staff.

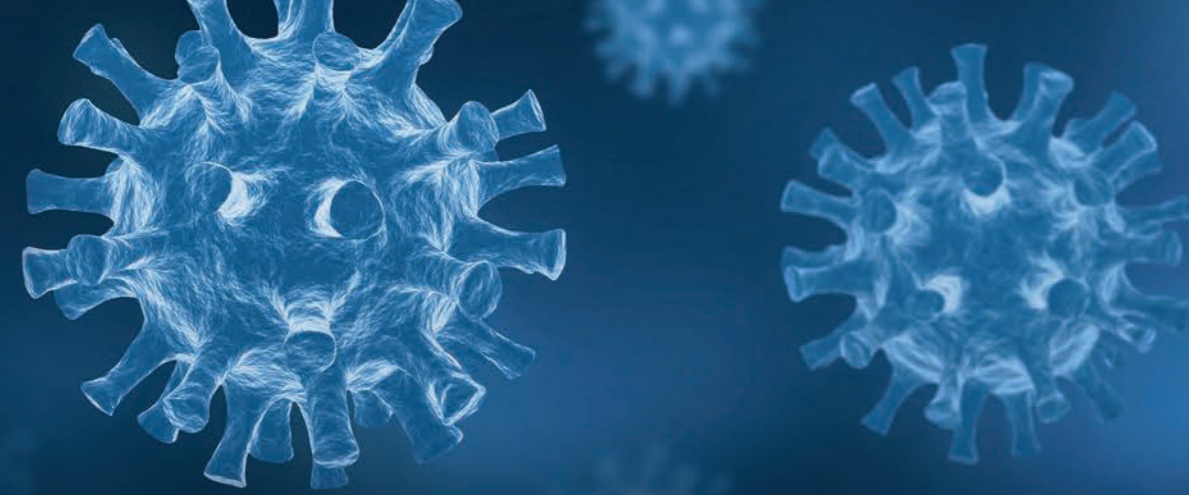
Tina Cunningham, Community Support Director for Border Biscuits, arranged for the gifting of several thousands of boxes of the company's biscuits to NHS staff in the Lanarkshire and Lothian regions.

Richard Bent, Senior Lecturer at QMU's Business School, contacted his former student with the idea of supplying a staff hub at St John's Hospital in West Lothian with boxes of their signature product. From there, the initiative quickly escalated, with the company donating biscuits to several different healthcare providers through its Border Community Support Foundation. □



Boxes of Border Biscuits ready for distribution





## Real Lives – people’s experience of COVID-19

**WE LOVE TO share stories of how QMU’s work is making a practical impact on everyday lives.**

Right now, there is no greater threat to our way of life than COVID-19, and our inspirational researchers wasted no time in responding to the crisis.

Professor Cathy Bulley is dedicated to conducting research that can make a real difference to people’s quality of life.

At the start of the pandemic, she worked with a team of multi-disciplinary researchers at QMU to apply for rapid research funding from the Chief Scientist’s Office. This supported the team’s research into people’s experience of illness during the pandemic and is enabling QMU to make a positive contribution at this time of crisis and well beyond.

Professor Bulley, who is Co-Director of the Centre for Health, Activity and Rehabilitation Research at QMU, gives us an insight into her recent COVID-19 project.

### Tell us about your research and why it’s important?

This research looked at people’s experiences of illness during the pandemic, but mainly focused on those who contracted COVID-19. We then used the insights to develop recommendations about the type of support that people need to help them recover.

By carefully listening to people’s experiences we were able to identify barriers that they encountered whilst trying to access support. This useful information is key in helping service designers develop accessible health and social care services which meet people’s needs.

### Why is this work important?

Everyone affected by COVID-19 has the right to have their voice heard. The research gives us an understanding of what people need to help them recover – no matter where they live, whether or not they spent time in hospital, or what ethnic group they are from.

Ultimately, we are able to share the results of our research to help other organisations develop accessible and effective services.

### What groups took part in the research?

We heard from people who have experienced both short and long-term effects of COVID-19, as well as other illnesses and health conditions. We also involved people who felt socially isolated; people from different geographical areas and minority groups; those involved in funding, designing, and delivering services; as well as people who advocate for others.

### How will the results be used and what happens next?

The report was submitted in October 2020 and will be available for policy makers, services providers and other interested parties to use.

The next stage will be to build on this research by looking at the longer term effects of COVID-19, with a focus on people living on low incomes and people from black, Asian and minority groups. □

### Interested in this research?

Follow Twitter  
[@SupportAfterCovidStudy](#)

## Investigating isolation and loneliness amongst asylum seekers and refugees during COVID-19

**WHEN THE COVID-19 pandemic began to unfold, the Scottish Government allocated some £5 million in funding for universities to develop and carry out research to combat the virus and limit its impact on society.**

As part of this initiative, QMU’s Dr Alison Strang, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Health and Development, and Dr Olivia Sagan, Head of the Division of Psychology, Sociology and Education, received £64,098 to research the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on isolation and loneliness amongst asylum seekers and refugees.

With the support of the Scottish Refugee Council and local authorities around Scotland, Dr Strang and Dr Sagan’s team carried out more than 50 in-depth interviews with asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland. Additionally, an online questionnaire was set up to gather national data on refugees’ social networks.

Dr Strang said: “For more than 20 years QMU’s Institute for Global Health and Development has been involved in researching the psychosocial wellbeing of people forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. We already know there are many pressures on people as they try to manage their lives and integrate into their new communities during the period of asylum seeking or resettlement. So, it seemed very likely that the additional challenges of the pandemic and its restrictions on these groups would be enormous. We were pleased to receive the funding from the

Scottish Government’s Chief Scientist’s Office in May 2020 demonstrating their commitment to understanding and addressing the extra pressures faced by refugees as a result of the pandemic.

For Dr Sagan, who has been involved in researching loneliness for some years, this research presented an opportunity to explore the experience of being in the eye of the perfect storm: a global pandemic, a loneliness pandemic and the complex and profoundly lonely experience of losing one’s home, country, family and community ties.

Dr Strang said: “Our research investigated the ways that the sudden rupture of already limited connections (for example, the closure of facilities such as schools and libraries, the sudden absence of community groups and the dependence on phones and computers for almost all human contact) impacted people’s capacity to cope with their challenging lives. We have learnt about the many creative and active ways refugees have been managing everyday stress; however, we have also seen the profound sense of isolation experienced by people with limited English. Even trying to participate in online language classes often created more stress than benefit with the challenges of trying to keep up with the conversation and navigate computers in English.”

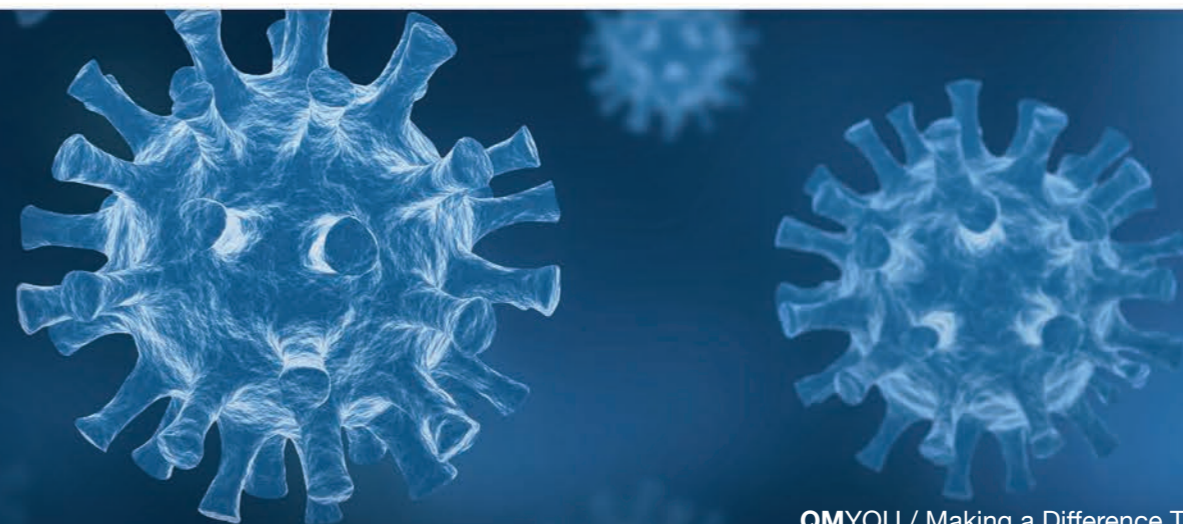
“The sense of powerlessness in an uncertain situation where it is difficult to know how to access trustworthy information, or how to keep safe, can be overwhelming and very damaging to mental health,” Dr Strang said.

“We learnt about a wide range of different experiences from our interviews. For some, their suffering was being compounded by a profound sense of isolation and hopelessness. Yet there were others, like recently reunited families, who were thankful for the chance to hunker down safely together. One man, whose wife had arrived in Scotland just before the pandemic struck told us about the joy of being able to spend so much time with his wife – ‘a walk in the park together almost made it possible to forget about coronavirus,’ he said.

“Refugees and asylum seekers, like all of us, seek to live their lives as best they can, managing the challenges and making the most of opportunities. Our research has deepened our understanding of the social connections that refugees in Scotland are either able to access or are excluded from in the current pandemic conditions. In addition, it has explored the way that people actively draw on their connections to manage and shape their own lives. A sense of control over your own life is crucial to good mental health and wellbeing. Yet in the absence of an understanding of how people such as refugees are experiencing the COVID pandemic, it is only too easy to thwart people unintentionally, even when the aim is to support and enable independence and resilience.” Dr Strang said.

“We have been pleased to present our findings and recommendations to the Chief Scientist’s Office of the Scottish Government, and will continue our commitment here at QMU to improving the experience of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland and around the world,” Dr Strang added. □

You can listen to Dr Olivia Sagan’s podcast about loneliness at: [www.spreaker.com/user/qmuni/qmu-podcast-episode-4](http://www.spreaker.com/user/qmuni/qmu-podcast-episode-4)





# Student primary teachers get serious about outdoor learning – taking the classroom into the forest

**ONE POSITIVE OUTCOME** from the COVID-19 pandemic is that children and adults discovered the benefits of connecting with nature. Whilst parents were challenged by the demands of home schooling, many used the great outdoors as a healthy escape from the digital world and a platform to engage youngsters in new learning opportunities.

Although lockdown helped reinforce the benefits of outdoor life, last year, QMU was ahead of the curve when it built in outdoor learning as a key part of its new teacher education programmes, which embed a commitment to environmental sustainability at their core. Post lockdown, its education experts are even more acutely aware of the importance that outdoor learning can have on children's mental and physical wellbeing.

The University's new BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary), which launched last year, has a contingent of highly skilled and experienced educators to equip new teachers with specialist outdoor skills, and it seems everyone wants to get involved!

The students have loved immersing themselves in woodland tasks and adventures but with a serious side to skills development: this is more than a stroll in the park! Students are working towards the Forest and Outdoor Learning Award (FOLA), which is a national certificate recognised by the Forest School Association and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Of course, outdoor learning should be fun, so apart from participating in the RSPB Great Birdwatch, students built over 100 bug hotels which were then installed at LOVE Gorgie City Farm in Edinburgh. Swapping a stuffy classroom for the chance to hone new skills in a magical ancient woodland, has opened the students' eyes to the possibilities that outdoor learning has to offer.

Tasked with enthusing students about outdoor education is former headteacher Chris Green, and Forest School Leader and former teacher, Patrick Boxall, who now lecture on QMU's BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary).

Patrick Boxall explained: "Many of the students had uncertainties about their own knowledge of the outdoors, so the course is helping develop their practical skills and teaching around outdoor learning. The work we did with students in the magnificent Lord Ancrum's Wood, in the grounds around Newbattle Abbey College in Midlothian, really inspired the students to develop a whole new set of skills. Their reaction to the course has been incredible and they seem to be loving every minute!"

Patrick continued: "Our aim is to develop a new generation of primary teachers who have the skills and knowledge to help children develop as engaged, healthy and resilient citizens who will make a positive contribution to society. There are many pressures on primary schools, so we're showcasing outdoor learning in a way that schools can sustain for themselves. This will help more young people develop a love and understanding of the outdoors which they can take into adulthood."

Chris Green said: "We are continuing to develop our outdoor learning training on the back of COVID and have been met with overwhelming enthusiasm from our new partnership organisations - the RSPB; The John Muir Trust, LOVE Gorgie Farm and Newbattle Abbey College - which are helping us upskill our trainee teachers through a range of exciting outdoor learning opportunities. We are also in discussions with the National Trust for Scotland about promoting access to outdoor spaces within the beautiful grounds of Newhailes House and Gardens in Musselburgh."

Chris concluded: "The future looks bright for outdoor learning and the timing is now right to ensure it develops as an essential component within modern education." □





# Celebrating the class of 2020

Chiara Menozzi



We are incredibly proud of our Class of 2020; our newest alumni, who are now part of a world-wide community of over 30,000 alumni from over 90 countries.

The determination, strength and resilience shown by our 2020 graduates was and continues to be, an inspiration to everyone in the QMU community.

Chiara Menozzi, Students' Union President, said: "It's been incredible to see the Class of 2020 succeed in the toughest of times. They spent years helping one another through the ups and downs of student life, and I know they'll continue to cheer each other on, long after they finally get to walk across the Usher Hall stage. We're super proud of them and their achievements. And, we believe that if they can make it through 2020, then they can accomplish anything. It's testament to their resilience, and their compassion and support for one another and the wider QMU community."

While we were not able to come together to celebrate our graduates hard work and wonderful achievements at official graduation ceremonies, we held an online celebration on 10th July 2020 to toast their successes.

The celebration included special congratulatory messages from our Chancellor, Prue Leith CBE; Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Sir Paul Grice; Chiara; and graduates who welcomed our Class of 2020 into the alumni community. □



## 2020 has been a year like no other for rising star Gbemisola

**WE ALWAYS GET** a thrill when we see our graduates popping up on our TV screens. Hearts burst with pride when we recognise the names and faces of our acting and drama graduates as they inhabit new characters in the latest TV drama or soap.

Usually it's a slow burn in the acting business – securing one gig at a time, but for Gbemisola Ikumelo, all her Christmas's seemed to come at once. In the space of a fortnight in 2020, she had won a TV BAFTA for her short 'Brain in Gear', had a comedy series based on said short commissioned by the BBC, and been cast in an American comedy-drama! Gbemisola continued to fill our TV screens later in 2020, appearing alongside Hugh Laurie as Steff Frost in the BBC One series 'Roadkill'. A quick flick over to ITV and you could also find her sharing the studio with Tom Allen, Paloma Faith and Joanna Lumley on the 'Jonathan Ross Show'.

Gbemisola studied BA Acting at QMU and, after graduating in 2003, she steadily developed her career with several parts in both theatre and film. However, it was her role as the troublesome Kadean in Dane Baptiste's show 'Sunny D' which gained her recognition as a comedy actor.

She was snapped up by the BBC and cast in 'Famalam', a zany new comedy sketch show featuring an array of oddball characters and off-the-wall situations. The super sharp sketch show stars black British talent behind and in front of the camera. And in 2018, when the show first hit our screens, British television was ready and waiting for a high profile comedic exploration of the contemporary black British experience. Gbemisola received a BAFTA nomination for 'Best Female Performance in a Comedy' for her work on 'Famalam', for which she is also a writer.

Outside of Famalam, Gbemisola spent much of her time developing her own comedy writing. Her most recent, Brain in Gear, debuted as one of the BBC's critically acclaimed Comedy Shorts in 2019, and received a BAFTA for best short form programme.

Written by and starring Gbemisola, Brain In Gear is a flat-share comedy centred around Remi, a "normal" single woman in her twenties who is battling anxiety in the form of her two alter egos, Boss Bitch Remi and Dark Remi.

Gbemisola could hardly believe her luck when her short was commissioned to run as a series on BBC2. The Brain



in Gear series continues the story of Remi as she attempts to get on with her life, but normal everyday tasks prove impossible due to constant interruptions from her inner thoughts.

Shane Allen, Controller Comedy Commissioning, said: "Gbemisola has fast become one of the leading comedy performers of her generation. Her range of characters is a joy to behold and we're proud to see her spread her considerable talent wings as creator, writer and co-director of this very special mini-series."

Josh Cole, Head of Comedy, BBC Studios, described Gbemisola as a "uniquely multitalented creative force"! High praise indeed from the British Broadcasting Corporation, but Gbemisola is also getting used to international recognition having starred in Netflix's 'Sex Education' and through her involvement in Amazon's reimagining of 'A League of Their Own'.

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a hard one for the creative industries but it has been a year like no other for this immensely talented rising star! □

## Presentation of Honorary Degrees

Each year, QMU awards honorary degrees to individuals who have made significant contributions in their fields and in 2020 honorary degrees were awarded to:

• **Professor Petra Wend** PhD, FRSA, FRSE  
- Former Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Queen Margaret University - Degree of Doctor of Education, Honoris Causa

• **Fergus Linehan**  
Director of the Edinburgh International Festival - Degree of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa

• **Kevin Browne-MacLeod**  
Director at Who Cares? Scotland - Degree of Doctor of the University, Honoris Causa







# New forensic nursing course will help people who have experienced rape and sexual assault



**Q** MU IS TO offer a new forensic practice course for nurses which it is hoped, subject to the outcome of a Test of Change project, will help to build a multi-disciplinary workforce for the future by equipping them to carry out forensic medical examinations and provide evidence for court. The development supports the work of the Scottish Government's Rape and Sexual Assault Taskforce led by the interim Chief Medical Officer for Scotland.

The Scottish Government is funding 20 places on QMU's Postgraduate Certificate in Person-Centred Practice: Advanced Forensic Practice (PgC PCP: AFP). This will be the first course of its kind in Scotland and represents over four years of policy, strategy and partnership work to change forensic practice.

This qualification will support any future development of advanced forensic practitioners in Scotland, who, as registered nurses, will be qualified to carry out forensic examinations and gather evidence to support criminal investigations and court cases. An important part of this new nursing role will be to skillfully blend the forensic work with person-centred care – treating everyone as an unique individual – and working to reduce trauma to the person by looking after their health and wellbeing, and respecting their rights, personhood and dignity.

Jessica Davidson, Senior Clinical Forensic Charge Nurse with the South East Scotland Police Custody and Forensic Examination Service at NHS Lothian, will lead the new course at QMU. Jessica explained: "Undertaking a forensic examination in sexual assault and rape cases requires the examiner to treat each person as an individual and take responsibility for that episode of care from start to finish. What is unique about this role is that the examination involves documenting and interpreting any injuries that the individual may have sustained at the time of the incident."

"The examination team's work also involves protecting the forensic integrity of the person, the treatment room and the case. They use hard science, clinical observation and the law to take responsibility for the case itself, as well as the individual. Anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted, or hurt by crime, experiences trauma. It is therefore important that the examiner works to minimise the potential for further trauma and begin the process of supporting recovery."

Professor Brendan McCormack, Divisions of Nursing, Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies at QMU, said: "The Scottish Government has been pivotal in enabling this course to come to fruition and we are extremely proud to be involved in this developing area of person centred nursing. The course also aims to develop nurses with leadership skills so they can direct and advance this important area of work in Scotland. This will help to ensure better support and health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals who have experienced rape or sexual assault."

"Our Advanced Forensic Practice course will be delivered in partnership with NHS Lothian, the Scottish judiciary, Police Scotland and The UK Association of Forensic Nurses (UKAFN). This means we will have the best experts in Scotland to guide our students through this exciting learning experience."

Professor Alex McMahan, NHS Lothian's Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals and Executive Lead, REAS and Prison Healthcare, said: "The important role of skilled nursing practice in forensic examination is one that NHS Lothian is proud to have helped to pioneer, and we are therefore delighted to be involved in the partnership delivering Scotland's first postgraduate qualification in its advanced practice."

Professor Fiona Coutts, Dean of Health Sciences at QMU, concluded: "This is a significant step forward in advancing this important specialist area of nursing. The School of Nursing at QMU has world renowned expertise in person-centred care – indeed, it is part of the DNA of our health sciences work. I am pleased that our nursing leadership is influencing the focus on this emerging area of nursing and that the new course aligns with the University's mission to shape a better world through education, research and innovation." □



# Keeping it real – VR gives paramedics a reality check

**LONG GONE ARE the days when a paramedic was referred to as an ‘ambulance driver’.**

The varied and demanding role of a front line paramedic extends way beyond patient transport or administering care in the back of an ambulance. In more recent years, the needs of the population have changed, which has had a direct impact on the role of the paramedic.

As our older population increases, so do the number of people who live with multiple long term conditions. The paramedic has had to evolve to accommodate the demands of operating in increasing diverse situations and working environments.

Nowadays, it is not uncommon for paramedics to be attached to a GP practice or to be working in community teams who aim to treat people locally and enable them to keep living in their homes. They can also be found working in response teams, dealing with major incidents; or in management roles in senior leadership positions.

In 2020, QMU commenced the first year of its new BSc Paramedic Science course to develop a new generation of paramedics. To support the expansion of the role beyond acute trauma, new styles of teaching are being introduced. This is helping learners understand the wider paramedic role which now involves the management of long term conditions; mental health care; support of older people; and work which will reduce hospital admissions.

As if our paramedic students weren't already living life in the fast lane, learning got a whole lot more exciting when QMU enlisted the expertise of Viarama – Scotland's first virtual reality social enterprise. Together, Viarama, and QMU's impressive paramedic teaching team, are creating a learning experience for students which is second to none.

Sona Mojziso, Lecturer on the BSc Paramedic Science, has worked as a paramedic for eight years. She explained: "One of the great things about virtual reality (VR) is that it can allow people to have experiences that otherwise would be impossible. For paramedics, this means we can place students in situations that would be dangerous in real life, and we can do that safely

in a controlled manner. Sometimes that situation maybe a day-to-day occurrence like dealing with someone in labour, or we can crank up the pressure by allowing them to experience a major incident or multiple casualty trauma."

Sona continued: "Working on the front line, paramedics are exposed to stressful and sometimes extreme situations that require quick decision making and decisive action. Often, people don't feel they are prepared for these situations but virtual reality is proving to be a game changer. It can be immensely useful in helping students get a feel for the situations that they will be working in. It allows them to feel as if they are part of a live event by learning from an expert who is dealing with the situation. They can use their observation skills; make assessments about what is going on; see decision making in action; and identify risk. It provides an immersive experience which will prepare them well for delivering the person-centred care required from a modern day paramedic."

Billy Agnew, Founder of Viarama, said: "Particularly in the current climate when everyone is working hard to keep students safe, VR is proving invaluable. We can gently expose students to situations that would be extremely challenging in a real-world setting. VR is allowing our students to experience complex episodes of care, but the crucial difference is that we can control what is shown, and how graphic a depiction that is. This allows learners to experience situations that would otherwise be very difficult to recreate in real life, which is vital in building confidence in their growing abilities.

"As the students advance in their learning, VR can be used to expose them to more complex and challenging situations. When the time is right, we can create a real hard core front line experience. It's quite an exhilarating way to learn."

Viarama is excited to be leading the VR experience at QMU. Billy said: "This forward-thinking and highly innovative approach taken by the University is setting the way for the future training and education of Scotland's new generation of paramedics."

Find out more about the BSc Paramedic Science at QMU at [www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/undergraduate-study/2021/bsc-paramedic-science/](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/undergraduate-study/2021/bsc-paramedic-science/)

Paul Gaughan  
- Lecturer in  
Paramedic  
Science



## Fascinating facts about QMU's paramedic teaching team

- **Paul Gaughan** has been a Special Operations Response Team (SORT) Paramedic. This role includes various disciplines including: (1) swift water rescue; (2) safe working at heights; (3) confined space working; and (4) multiple casualty and major incident specific training.
- **Sona Mojziso** has experience as a working paramedic both in Slovakia and the UK. She is working towards a PhD in public health and has a passion for simulation medicine – an area where she sees huge potential for research and development.
- **Billy Agnew** runs Viarama, which is the world's only virtual reality social enterprise.



# Taking bold steps to advance leadership in dementia



**D**EMENTIA IS AN area which has touched the lives of so many people in our communities. Staff within QMU's Division of Nursing are passionate about changing the way society considers dementia. Together, with other academics, creative agencies and community groups they are helping people who live with dementia to flourish and not be characterised through the lens of their dementia. They believe that every person has the right to live their best life, despite their dementia diagnosis.

The Bold programme is an example of such beliefs being actioned and its five-year programme takes a fresh approach to dementia. Providing free leadership opportunities across Scotland, this innovative initiative blends knowledge about dementia with creativity with a common sense approach. Importantly, it brings together all people who are living with dementia (ie anyone who has the condition, lives with someone with dementia, provides care to people or connects with people living with dementia in our communities), artists and individuals from all walks of life – it's a melting pot of individuals with varied experience and different backgrounds who can contribute to creating the conditions for people with dementia to flourish. Creativity and thinking differently about little changes that can help to improve the lives of those with dementia are at the heart of the programme. Looking at the bigger picture - it's about developing social leaders to support positive changes in the way we enable people living with dementia to live life to the full for all of their lives.

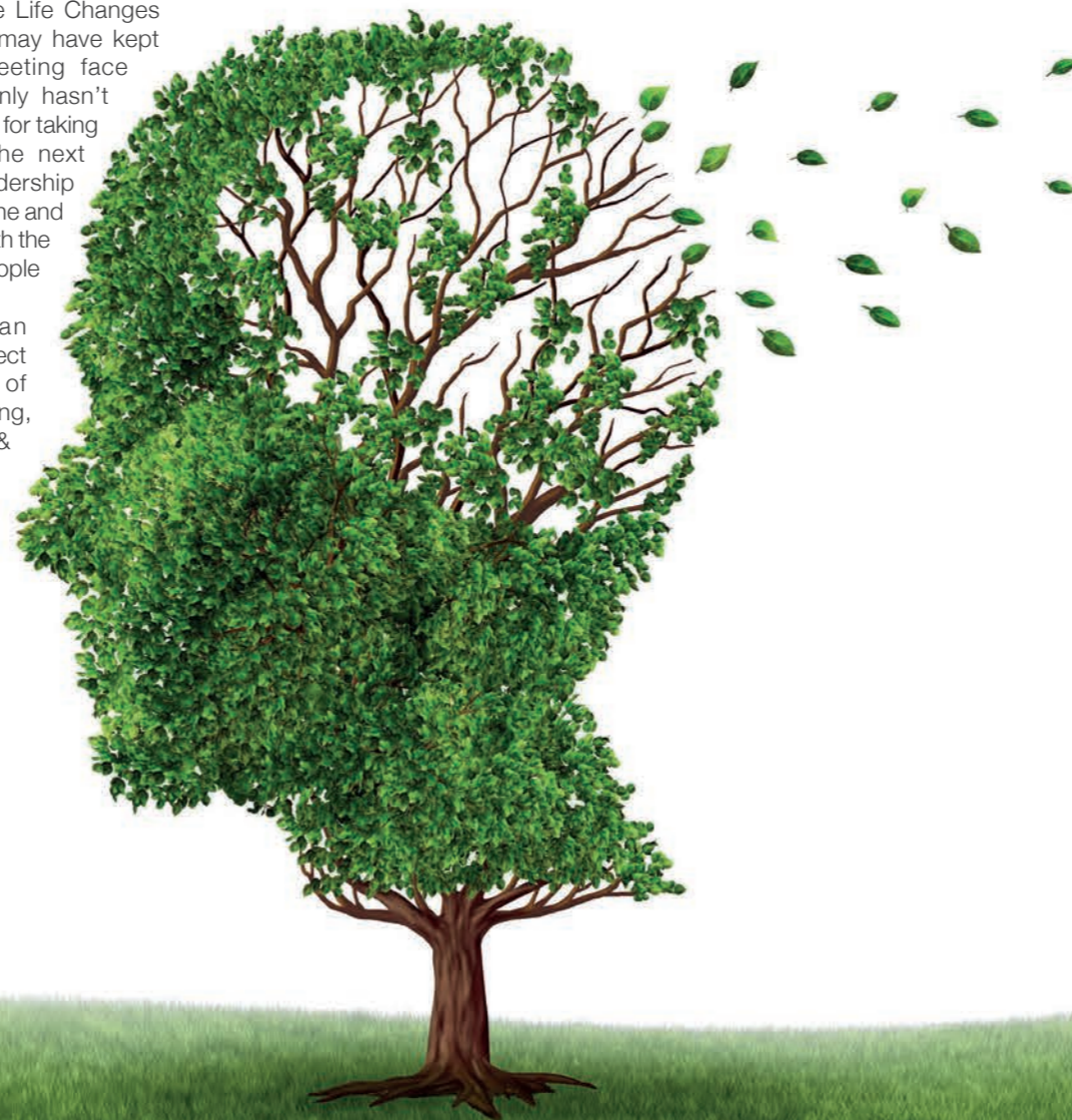
Delivered in partnership by QMU and the University of Edinburgh, Bold is funded by the Life Changes Trust. The pandemic may have kept participants from meeting face to face, but it certainly hasn't dampened enthusiasm for taking the programme to the next level. The Social Leadership Programme is now online and the team is delighted with the level of interest from people wishing to participate.

Professor Brendan McCormack, Bold Project Co-Lead and Head of the Divisions of Nursing, Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies at QMU, explained: "There are

lots of misconceptions about people living with dementia and we'd like to change that. There is also some great work being done across communities and we need to build on and share that. Our goal is to create flourishing communities where having dementia doesn't matter to how we live our lives. We are determined to encourage our participants to lead on creating changes, no matter how small, and removing labels that get in the way of people living their best lives."

He concluded: "We initially launched the programme with cohorts in Inverness and in East Lothian but our Online Social Leadership Programme can now accommodate anyone from across Scotland. We are proud to be bringing diverse types of leaders together – on an equal footing – and providing free leadership development opportunities so that participants can learn from each other, and can develop skills and knowledge that will make a difference."

Find out more about the project and the online leadership course at <https://bold-scotland.org>. □



# Sexual expression, dementia and people living in care home – is this the last taboo?

**I**NTIMACY, SEXUAL EXPRESSION and sexuality are often not the first topics that spring to mind when thinking about the care needs of people with dementia. However, if truth be told, the need for intimacy and sexual expression does not necessarily diminish as we move into older age, nor may it disappear with loss of capacity.

Research shows that sexual expression provides emotional and physical benefits throughout life, and therefore room to express one's sexuality needs to be taken seriously by those working in the care of people with dementia.

Sadly, the topic of sexual expression is often overlooked in policy and practice. However, rather than shy away from this sensitive and sometimes controversial topic, one PhD student has made this complex subject the focus of her doctorate research.

Karen Rennie is a research assistant based within QMU's Centre for Person-Centred Practice Research. She also works as a staff nurse in a care home and wanted to carry out research which would challenge assumptions, break down barriers and ultimately improve person-centred care for people living with dementia. The topic of Karen's PhD focuses on sexual expression in people living with dementia, and how that impacts on nursing care. As far as we know, Karen is the first person to conduct a PhD which focuses on sexual expression involving people with dementia (who are viewed as 'adults with incapacity'), and this complex subject is sure to spark debate amongst a wide range of professionals working in healthcare. This is a big breakthrough as people living with dementia are usually excluded from research, especially when exploring sexual expression and intimate relationships.

She explained: "Sexual expression is an important part of people's health and wellbeing, and if we are going to practice person-centred care, we need to challenge areas like this that are still considered to be taboo. This means encouraging healthcare professionals to question their own beliefs and value systems.

"It's not a straight forward subject. People experiencing dementia, especially those living in care homes, often have complex needs. It is therefore very challenging for staff to respond appropriately and sensitively to the more intimate and sexual aspects of a resident's personality and needs. But it's important to get health professionals, care home and nursing home staff to talk about and consider individual needs to ensure that people living with dementia are living full lives.

"There are many aspects to consider. Individuals with dementia may be in a relationship and carers need to take into account issues of consent, human rights law, how to involve family members and how to afford privacy."

Karen continued: "We have looked at attitudes across the world to sexual expression in people with dementia. It appears to be universal that the phenomenon of sexual expression is uncomfortable for many nursing and care home staff and they feel uncertain on how to ensure person-centred care responses. So there is much work to be done. This is why we need to hear the voices of the people living with dementia."

Karen is now in the third year of her PhD and has been encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by professionals and non-professionals to this much under researched area of dementia care.

Karen is just one of a number of QMU PhD students who are developing their research around the subject of dementia. For example, we have projects which are focused on (1) how the police service can respond in a person-centred way to 'wandering' behaviour of people with dementia; (2) hospital discharge process and how to improve transition between hospitals and care homes; (3) the development of a shared decision making model for patients with dementia; and (4) the use of story-telling to enable person-centred care. □





**Q: Tell us exactly what osteoporosis is.**

**A:** Osteoporosis is a disease that makes bones more porous and reduces their density - often the spine is the most affected followed by hips and wrists - which results in increased bone fragility. This means people with osteoporosis have a much higher risk of low-trauma (minimal force) fractures - simply falling from a standing height or less can cause fractures in those with osteoporosis. In fact, osteoporosis accounts for around 300,000 fractures per year in the UK.

**Q: How many people are affected by osteoporosis? What's causing it to become such a big problem for so many people?**

**A:** As it stands, osteoporosis affects more than three million people in the UK, including 250,000 in Scotland. Interestingly, rates of fractures in men and women age 50+ are greater in Scotland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom and women aged 50+ in Scotland are known to be at higher risk of fragility fractures than their counterparts in London. The economic burden of new and prior fractures in the UK is £3,496 million each year, and it's estimated that by 2025 that burden will increase to £5,465 million. And that's not to mention the cost to the wellbeing of people with osteoporosis.

From 2012, as part of a series of osteoporosis education workshops we ran for our Lydia Osteoporosis Project, we gave a number of NHS staff members the opportunity to wear an 'osteoporosis suit' and experience some of the challenges that come with having the disease. Participants reported fear of falling; feeling especially vulnerable; being unable to make eye contact; slowness doing activities and heightened anxiety. They came away from the workshop with enhanced recognition of the need to not hurry people with osteoporosis and to carefully consider their moving and handling techniques.

**Q: What's the Lydia Osteoporosis Project?**

**A:** The Lydia Osteoporosis Project is a research and education programme run by QMU thanks to the incredible philanthropic support of anonymous donors.

It started in 2011 and aims to raise awareness of osteoporosis and the increased risk of fracture among allied health profession students and frontline healthcare staff who care for people with the condition.

The project focuses on investigating mobility implications for people with osteoporosis, and the moving and handling of older people in acute care in the first and second phases of the project and within the third phase we focused on community settings. The Lydia Osteoporosis Plus project takes the research findings from the previous phases to a wider implementation phase and embraces the significant public health/bone health agenda across different age groups. We aim to promote person-centred, safe and effective practice, which we do through raising awareness of how common osteoporosis is in the ageing population, the importance of promoting bone and musculoskeletal health and the high risk of low trauma or fragility fractures.

**Q: Where can I find out more?**

**A:** There's some really great information and resources on the website: [www.lydiaosteoporosis.com/](http://www.lydiaosteoporosis.com/) but you can also register to attend our next open source online learning programme, called 'Caring 4 my Bones'. More than 250 students and clinicians from around the world have completed the programme so far - we're very proud of it and we're looking forward to expanding its reach in the future.

Dr Margaret Smith has led the Lydia Osteoporosis Project at QMU and has been instrumental in its success. We wish Margaret every success and happiness in her retirement ☐

# Ready, set, go: researching for a new Paralympic sport

**H**AVE YOU HEARD about RaceRunning? The sport was invented in Denmark the '90s by two Paralympic athletes and it enables people with limited mobility to swap their wheelchairs or walking aids for a running frame so they can get moving. The running frame (sometimes called a running bike) doesn't have any pedals but it does have three wheels, a saddle and trunk support, so it supports users while they walk or run.

RaceRunning has been gaining in popularity, with clubs and competitions popping up around the world, for a while now. In 2019 it made its debut into the world of international sporting competition at the World Para Athletic Championships in Dubai, and on 20 November 2020 it was announced that RaceRunning (recently renamed Frame Running) is on the provisional programme for the Paralympic games in Paris 2024.

QMU's Dr Marietta van der Linden, a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Health Sciences, has been working - in partnership with a colleague at the University of Edinburgh and a physiotherapist from RaceRunning Scotland, and the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association - on developing a classification system that would enable RaceRunning to be a potential Paralympic event.

Dr van der Linden said: "All sports in the Paralympics need a classification system which is based on scientific evidence. A classification system assesses the extent of an athlete's impairment and groups together athletes based on this assessment. This is about ensuring it's a fair

competition and only those with comparable abilities are competing against each other.

"The classification system to assess RaceRunning athletes, which I've been working on with my colleagues, includes measures that are commonly used by physiotherapists such as spasticity (stiffness in muscles of which gets worse with faster movements) and selective motor control (the ability to make a movement in one joint without moving others). Simple movements which we all take for granted such as kicking a ball, let alone running, can therefore be very challenging for people with a coordination impairment such as cerebral palsy," Dr van der Linden explained.

"But the value of RaceRunning isn't just in the opportunity for people with severe physical impairments to become internationally-recognised athletes. Increased awareness of RaceRunning could mean those with a range of mobility issues - including people recovering from a stroke and those living with osteoarthritis, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease or muscular dystrophy - might try out the sport and enjoy the physical, mental health and social benefits.

"We've seen this happen locally when Enjoy Leisure East Lothian received some fantastic funding support from community groups, including Rotary, to purchase RaceRunning frames for local users. It's brilliant to see the enjoyment and self-esteem benefits people with mobility challenges get from recreational RaceRunning. And I'm very proud of the QMU Physiotherapy students who volunteer down at the leisure centre's track to help get people moving on the running frames," Dr van der Linden added. ☐





# 75 YEARS of Speech and Language

## Celebrating 75 years of speech at QMU



### Professor Janet Beck reminisces about QMU's development of speech and language therapy, and looks towards its future!

Professor Janet Beck is the Head of QMU's Speech and Hearing Sciences Division. She obtained a degree in Genetics but happened upon a two-year graduate diploma in speech and language therapy (SLT) offered by the then, Queen Margaret College. After graduating, she joined a research project at The University of Edinburgh looking at the development of clinical tools for analysing voice. During that period, she completed a PhD before returning to QMU in 1990 - this time as a member of the lecturing team. She's been with the University ever since. Professor Beck was awarded a fellowship of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in 2008 and became head of the division in 2010.

"When I started at QMU, SLT was headed up by Moira McGovern - she was one of the first professors in the field. At a time when research in the area wasn't a big thing, she insisted on there being a speech lab on campus, along with a technician to support research. So that aspect of SLT was embedded in our practice from the inception of the subject at QMU. Moira was always open to people who had come to the subject from other disciplines." That spirit lives on at the University today, with a postgraduate pre-registration qualification available to graduates wishing to move into the field.

QMU's Speech and Language Therapy course soon became one of the UK's earliest degree programmes in the area: "My first year at the University was also the first time that linguistics had been part of the national curriculum for speech and language therapists."

When it comes to significant milestones within the department's history, being one of the first speech and language therapy departments to be awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2002 stands out for Janet: "It was specifically for the way that we had integrated research, clinical practice and education. It was recognition that QMU's research had generated new types of clinical assessment, which had then fed into clinical practice and had worldwide impact.

"Students were able to benefit, not just from staff input into their programmes, but from getting involved in aspects of research - it was a joined-up approach, and a key area highlighted in our award application was EPG (electropalatography)."

Another strand featured here was vocal profile analysis, which is now a big part of The Voice Distillery - a voiceover casting initiative that's mission is to ensure all voices are heard in the ever-growing voiceover industry.

Looking towards the future of speech and language therapy, Professor Beck is aware of the pressure to ensure students are educated for the profession as it is now, whilst also preparing them so they can lead positive changes as the profession advances. She said: "In an ideal world, we would be equipping them for a career in a profession that doesn't yet exist. Due to the pandemic, there have been shifts in the way we think about education, but also changes within the field itself. It's not that the technology hasn't been around until now, or that we haven't been thinking about things like telehealth - it's more that the take-up hadn't been substantial until recent times forced a change in delivery mode."

Professor Beck feels that there are real positives to this sudden progression: "We've been thinking for a while about how to utilise mobile technology to monitor people's speech from their own homes, and then use that to deliver home-based therapy. The pandemic has pushed current practices to adapt, and this will allow us to make a more naturalistic assessment of what communication is like in everyday life.

"Another key area is looking more creatively at how we deliver practice-based education for students and how we use simulations of clinical activities - our staff have done a huge amount of work in developing these this year. They don't replicate clinical practice, but they do go a long way towards replicating some clinical decision-making associated with practical tasks that previously would have been part of the placement experience." □



Class of 1961, Edinburgh

# 50 YEARS of Drama & Performing Arts



**IMAGINE A WORLD where the performing arts didn't exist. A world in which your favourite play, or musical, or film was simply no more - what a wonderless world it would be. At QMU we understand how important the performing arts are to our collective wellbeing. They enrich our lives, give voice to our stories, and embody our cultures and values.**

For fifty years successive staff at QMU have worked to ensure that a future in the performing arts is open to anyone. We are as committed to this now as we were in 1971 when the Edinburgh College of Speech and Drama was incorporated

into Queen Margaret College. Studying the performing arts should not be something that only a small minority have the resources to pursue. The stories we tell on stage and screen should be of, by and for all of us.

As I write this, the performing arts are one of the sectors hardest hit by the global pandemic. But the pandemic has also highlighted how endlessly resilient and creative the passionate people who work in this field are. I recognise that very same passion, resilience and creativity in our students and it fills me with hope and excitement for what they will create in the future. I know that the performing arts

will thrive again, and I am confident that QMU will continue to be at the forefront of its success.

Throughout 2021 we will be celebrating the success of all our performing arts graduates and I encourage you to get in touch with your story. The next few pages are dedicated to a handful of our most prominent acting and performance alumni, celebrating their QMU story - I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I did. □

**Professor David Stevenson**, Acting Dean of Arts, Social Sciences and Management, and Class of 2016



## 60 second interview with BBC CBeebies star Danielle Jam

**It's been almost two years since we last spoke with Danielle, who graduated in 2018 with a BA (Hons) Acting for Stage and Screen. She's best known for her role as Daisy in the CBeebies hit TV show 'Molly and Mack'. Danielle took a break from filming the third series of the children's family drama to chat to us.**

### What's happened since your last interview with us?

I filmed the second series of the CBeebies show Molly and Mack; starred in my first pantomime; toured Sonnet Youth's theatre production of 'thick skin, elastic heart'; and shot the BBC drama short, 'Dash'.

### What was your first acting role?

I played an orphan, a pick pocket and a milkmaid in an amateur dramatics production of 'Oliver'.

### Name one thing that you enjoyed from your degree course?

I loved studying Shakespearean and Greek plays. It encouraged me to think about classical theatre in a different way and revealed a new way of acting.

### Fondest memory of QMU?

Living away from home for the first time in a new city. I loved the independence and living on campus with new people. It helped me grow as an individual.

### What's been critical in preparing you for an acting career?

Preparing a business plan. At QMU we were tasked with setting career goals and exploring alternative/co-existing work options to support ourselves between acting jobs.

The business plan, head shots, monologues and portfolio have been essential for the transition between student life and professional career. The QMU course taught me how to be an actor, not just how to act!

### Three words that best describe your time at QMU?

Transforming. Fun. Independence.

### Favourite role or production?

My graduate scheme production of Dundee Rep's 'The Snow Queen' - that was very special.

### Best advice you've been given?

Take care of my mental health and wellbeing.

### Which do you prefer - stage or screen?

Stage - there's more time for the rehearsal process!

### If you'd chosen an alternative career, what would it have been?

I love story telling so maybe an English teacher or a novelist.

### Hopes for the future?

More representation within the industry. It's one of the things that drives me as an actress. □

**The third series of CBeebies, Molly & Mack is due to be aired in 2021.**





# Kevin McKidd

## – The long road to Hollywood

Grey's Anatomy' star Kevin McKidd is one of the most loved TV actors in America. Kevin talks to Thomas Kelly, QMU's Head of Development and Alumni Relations, about his journey from QMC to Hollywood, taking the rough with the smooth, and how a little bit of luck can change your whole career.

"When I was a kid, I was painfully shy."

We catch-up via phone as Kevin drives through Los Angeles. He's having some down time during the filming of 'Grey's Anatomy' season 17. As he takes me on a journey through the highs and lows of his career, it's evident he's come a long way from being the shy boy from the Scottish Highlands.

In Primary 5, he took part in a play about a king who couldn't stop sneezing: "I played the sneezing king, the comedy role. My shyness disappeared when I walked on stage. That's when I got hooked!"

At the tender age of 16, Kevin went to the University of Edinburgh to study engineering. His parents wanted him to study "something sensible", but Kevin confesses: "...in my heart I knew I wanted to be an actor".

"So I applied for drama school. I'd fallen in love with Edinburgh so I only auditioned for Queen Margaret."

Kevin only made it as far as the car park after his audition before being offered an on the spot place on the course!

"I went to the phone box to call my mum and dad. I was nervous as hell.

"Mum, Dad, you're never going to believe this. I'm leaving university, I'm not going to be an engineer, I've just got into drama school."

"I thought they'd go off at the deep end, but instead they said: 'We always knew that was what was going to happen, Kev. Congratulations, we support you'."

When we talk about Kevin's time at QMC, incredibly, he reels off every single production he was part of, character he played and class he took part in – from fencing to method acting.

"I always remember Lynn Bains teaching Uta Hagan techniques." Uta Hagan was a German-American actress who went on to be very well known for her acting techniques based around acting normally in imaginary circumstances. He explained: "We had to bring every item from our bedrooms into class. We were asked to setup our bedroom on stage, sit on our bed, in front of everyone else, and just act normal. It's much harder than it sounds and f\*\*\*ing intimidating. Every class was like going to the dentist, but boy, did we learn! To this day, I still use these skills."

Fast forward to Kevin's final year. "I got lucky, as I had my first acting job already lined up before graduating ('The Silver Darlings' by John McGrath). Wildcat Theatre Company needed a young, male actor who sounded like he was from the Highlands – I'm from Elgin. It was a done deal."

During the Scottish tour with The Silver Darlings, Kevin "got lucky again". ICM, the biggest agency in London, saw the production and signed him.

"I'd never even heard of ICM – I thought it was a computer company. I was very much a country bumpkin, never having left Scotland before, but I went down to the ICM Offices in the middle of Oxford Street, ... and that was it! I had a London agent!"

That was far from Kevin's "big break". Work dried up for a while but eventually he gets a gig in Glasgow – a film called 'Small Faces' – and takes his first step away from theatre.

"During the filming of Small Faces, Danny Boyle was in Glasgow for the pre-production of 'Trainspotting'. Danny hears about the up-and-coming actors filming Small Faces and wants to see footage. He asked me to audition for the part of Tommy and the rest is history."

We chat about filming Trainspotting and the reality of filming a low budget film. He laughs about the one little campervan where all the male cast members would cram in together and get changed into costumes. They would then get out, smoke some cigarettes on the freezing cold street corner, whilst the female cast members got changed. I can't help but imagine the scene: Kevin McKidd, Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle, Jonny Lee Miller and Ewen Bremner all crammed into one campervan!

"Whilst we were still filming, the producer showed us the five minute film trailer with that Iggy Pop song. We all thought we had been filming this hard-hitting piece, but what Danny did was mix up real gritty action with pop culture. After seeing the trailer, we realised this could really be something special for Scottish cinema.

"It wasn't until walking into the premier, and seeing the likes of Liam Gallagher, did I realise this was much more than a film – it was a cultural movement!"

"After filming Trainspotting, I was living in Partick and work dried up. By the time the premier came around, I had no money and I had to borrow a suit. We got picked up in a limousine to go to the premier, and I remember thinking 'I hope we've got a lift back!' We didn't, so after the premier, and the big fancy do, me and my girlfriend walked home in the pouring rain!"

Everyone told Kevin to move to America after Trainspotting. He said: "The Trainspotting cast were all doing really well; Ewan (McGregor) had just got the 'Star Wars' gig. However, this is one of the only times I listened to my gut – and got it right. I was a reasonably innocent boy from Elgin and didn't have much street smart about me. Los Angeles would have just chewed me up and spat me out."

During his mid 20's he was forced to take jobs on building sites and pubs to support his young family. He thought he'd made the wrong decision staying in the UK, however, his acting work grows momentum again with work at the Royal Court, and then with the 2002 action horror film 'Dog Soldiers'.

In 2003, Kevin finds himself in Bucharest filming 'Gunpowder Treason and Plot'. Bruno Heller (executive producer of the soon to be HBO hit 'Rome') is also there scoping out the studio next door as a potential filming location. Kevin hears the American voices and introduces himself – it was his first step towards securing the role of 'Lucius'.

Throughout our interview, Kevin often talks about "being lucky" or in the right place at the right time. There is clearly an element of luck here, but a lot of hard work, determination and resilience surrounds it.

"I get annoyed when people refer to my 'overnight success'!" There's a real passion in Kevin's voice now. "I had 15 years of really hard work before I got the Rome gig. But QMC prepared me for this. The course demanded everything from us, but also prepared us to deal with rejection, failure, and uncertainty."

Rome paves the way to the lead role of Dan Vasser in 'Journeyman'. As the romantic, time-travelling TV show takes off, Kevin makes the big move to LA! However, the 2007/08 writers' strike begins, and Journeyman is cancelled, LA becomes a ghost town for eight-months and Kevin is running out of money ... again. "I picked the worst time to move to LA." Kevin's kids are at school in LA and that is the only thing that keeps him there during this really tough period.

However, the writers' strike ends and one week later Kevin gets a call from his agent to say that Shonda Rhimes (Producer for 'Grey's Anatomy') wants to talk to him about a new character in the show.

"My agent tells me the role of Owen Hunt was between me and James Van Der Beek (known for playing Dawson in 'Dawson's Creek') but Shonda is going on holiday for two weeks and she'll decide when she's back... Two weeks later I get a call saying 'She chose you'. And that was it...I've been here ever since."

Kevin has been Owen Hunt in Grey's Anatomy for eleven years now, and he loves it as much today as he did when he started.

"The life of an actor is like a travelling salesman - you're living out of a suitcase and you don't know where you'll be next week. With Grey's Anatomy, I've signed long contracts and I've used this as a chance to plant my feet in one place for a while.

"I've played this brilliant character, whilst being at home and getting to watch my kids grow up." The show's also given Kevin the chance to direct – over 30 episodes so far!

We finish up by talking about Kevin's bucket list, which involves directing his first film, writing (which is the one aspect that scares him most) and joining the Royal Shakespeare Company – something that Kevin has had to turn down in the past.

"I feel like the past 11/12 years has been a detour on this mad journey that I've been on. As they say in America 'it's all been gravy'."

Kevin studied Diploma in Drama and graduated from Queen Margaret College in 1994. □



# Q&A with actor Michael Nardone

The Scottish actor, who is known for his recent role in the BBC crime drama 'Traces', hit TV series 'The Night Manager' and 'Rome', and the much loved Scottish TV soap 'River City', speaks to Donna Cochrane, QMU's Development and Alumni Officer, about his fencing days at QMU, lockdown writing and his love for Edinburgh.



Born and bred in Fife, Michael studied at Kirkcaldy College of Technology before joining what was then Queen Margaret College. Initially, he enrolled on the Stage Management course before switching to Drama and graduating in 1988.

Donna finds out how it all started during his school days in Ballingry.

#### What sparked your interest in acting?

I have my sister to thank for that! She was a member of Fife Youth Theatre and when the cast member who was playing the role of 'Tony' in the group's production of 'West Side Story' dropped out, she encouraged me to try-out for the role as she knew I could sing. So I went along, auditioned and got the part. That's when I fell in love with performing.

As a teenager, I lacked confidence, and acting gave me the opportunity to express myself through the voice of someone else.

#### What was your first paid acting job?

During my first year at QMC, I appeared in an episode of 'Taggart'. Our lecturers encouraged us to gain professional experience while we were studying. It proved invaluable, especially for the TV industry, having the insight into how things are run on a shoot and the production language used on set.

#### What did you do after graduation?

I performed in a lot of theatre productions with the Traverse Theatre, Communicado, Dundee Rep, Royal Lyceum Theatre and Wildcat Theatre. I also did a few BBC Radio productions and commercials, but I soon realised that if I wanted to establish a career in TV then I'd need to break into TV quickly, so I sought out more TV acting roles.

#### What aspect of your QMC course has proved vital for your acting career?

The greatest lesson I learned at QMC was that accurate listening is the most important part of acting. You can't respond effectively if you're not deeply engaged in listening.

#### What are your best memories of QMC?

I had a fantastic three years at QMC. The training was hard-work but our lecturers were amazing. They inspired us to be our best.

My happiest memories are performing in student productions directed by the brilliant Marilyn Gray and Calum Mill. It was wonderful to learn from their wisdom and experience.

Another highlight was being part of the QMC fencing team, travelling around the UK, competing in tournaments and winning a fair bit of silverware! Our coach (and fencing and stage-combat lecturer) Bert Bracewell was hugely motivating.

#### What's the most significant thing you've learned during your career?

The most important person in the room is the audience. The top directors have also been the ones who invest the time

with actors during the rehearsal process to encourage the best possible performances, ensuring stories are told in the most impactful way to keep audiences engaged.

#### Which roles have you most enjoyed playing?

I loved playing the lead role in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. It was the most challenging role, both physically and mentally, but also the most rewarding one.

I also enjoyed being Ivan Sujic in the Canadian detective series 'Durham County 3'. It was a fantastic production to be part of.

#### Are there any roles which you'd love to play?

Lots! I'd relish playing 'Macbeth' again and Eddie Carbone from 'A View from the Bridge' is another dream role.

I'm also a huge 'Inspector Rebus' fan; perhaps I'm drawn to the Fife connection!

I love traditional folk music and I'm passionate about the radical folk singer and songwriter, Euan MacColl.

Another role is the Scottish-born American naturalist, John Muir. I'm a great admirer of his life and work.

#### Do you have ambitions to write, direct or produce?

Yes, definitely. The natural progression is probably to go from acting to directing but during last year's lockdown, I spent some time script writing.

I'm fascinated by folklore and history so I explored these areas. But as I worked on the script, the ideas became bigger and bigger and started to stray away from the original storyline, so I've taken a short break from writing, to think things through and decide what should happen next in the story. Who knows, maybe the script will become a novel!

#### What are you enjoying most about living back in Edinburgh?

Everything! It's an amazing city, steeped with character and depth. From its people, the arts, the architecture, its history and myths (stories you couldn't write!).

#### What's next for you?

I'm due to start filming the second series of the TV crime drama 'Traces', which is set in Dundee. I play DI Neil McKinven. □

Selected appearances:

TV/Film	Theatre
Traces	Macbeth
The Night Manager	King Lear
Line of Duty series 2	Black Watch
Durham County series 3	Cyrano de Bergerac
Rome series 1 & 2	Knives in Hens
River City	Victoria
Whisky Galore!	Gagarin Way
Child 44	The Cheviot, the Stag & the Black, Black Oil

Photo by  
Leila Nardone



# From QMU to Craighlang

Actors Jane McCarry and Mark Cox reminisce about student life at Queen Margaret College and their years starring in two of Scotland's best loved TV comedies, 'Chewing the Fat' and 'Still Game'.

Interview by Thomas Kelly, QMU's Head of Development and Alumni.

**It's a November Monday morning. Jane and Mark should be preparing for an evening show of their new stage show 'Still Gaun', but this has been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, they are at their respective homes in Glasgow, joining a Zoom call to talk all things QMU (or QMC as it was when they studied there).**

"Mark, I was going to phone you, but I'll just tell you both since you're here," says Jane, as she recounts a hilarious story from the previous day. It's just like watching an episode of 'Still Game', Isa is in full swing and Tam can't get a word in edgeways. They're both roaring with laughter by the end and it's apparent how good friends Jane and Mark have become.

"We knew each other at QMC, but we didn't really become good friends until after," Jane tells me.

"We kept getting cast together and our paths kept crossing but it wasn't until our late 20's that we started becoming closer friends," adds Mark.

Starting at the beginning - Youth Theatre and ushering at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow saw Mark's interest in drama grow. We talk about how his careers advisor at school completely ignored his desire to go to drama college, and instead, encouraged him to apply for an apprenticeship.

"Work always felt like a stopgap rather than a career. The family wasn't very keen on me giving up an apprenticeship to go to drama school, but I eventually got their support to go and do it. Lots of people don't get the opportunity to go and do what they really want to do. That's always been very important to me, that I got the chance," said Mark.

Jane's journey to QMC was a little different - first appearing in several shows at Glasgow Arts Centre (GAC) and then completing a one-year drama course at Clydebank College. She recalls how Robin Wilson (then Director at GAC, now lecturer at QMU) helped her prepare her audition pieces.

Both had the real feeling that Queen Margaret was different and a 'bit more them'.

Mark goes on to say: "QMC suited us perfectly. We are theatricals but we're grounded. We've got families, dogs and cats and everything else. QMC felt like home." And right on cue, Mark nips away for a few seconds to let his new kittens back into the house.

Reminiscing about their fondest memories, both Jane and Mark express their love for Bert Bracewell.

"Bert was the fencing and stage-fighting teacher and an absolute legend. He was one of my favourite people in the world. Wee Bert - I just loved him."

Image courtesy of BBC Studios Scotland (Characters Tam & Isa from 'Still Game')

Mark adds: "He made everyone feel like they could be a world champion."

This isn't the first, and I doubt the last, I've heard about Bert Bracewell, who sadly passed away in 2020. He has clearly left a lasting impression on all those he taught.

Jane and Mark fondly mention other lecturers: Lynn Bains, Clive Perry, Christine Raffaelli and Marilyn Gray, to name a few. They reflect on their training and what was expected of them; at least three 12-hour days a week and lateness was just not accepted - three strikes and you were out! "We had to do a 30 minute physical warm-up every morning," remarks Mark. Both Jane and Mark are acutely aware of the discipline they received at QMC and how important this was for preparing them for successful careers.

Jane came back to QMU six-years after receiving her diploma to study another year to gain a degree.

"I was a different student second round, rather than thinking about getting my 20 pence on the pool table and doing the minimum, I was the pain in the a\*\*\* that was always asking questions!"

We move on to talk about their roles in 'Still Game'.

Mark describes how he first got involved with the sitcom. "I was out drinking with my friend Paul Riley (Winston), he says to me that Ford (Kiernan) and Greg (Hemphill) (creators of Still Game and 'Chewin' the Fat) were writing for the telly and needed a couple of characters. I appeared in a couple of Chewin' the Fat sketches and this led to Still Game."

Jane's journey to Still Game came from having worked with Ford and Greg on a number of sketch and stage shows early in her career.

"I actually played a home help who was very similar to Isa in a comedy sketch show called 'Pulp Video'. I then did the radio Chewin' the Fat. I remember, I'd just had a baby, I was greetin' because I hadn't slept for weeks and then Julie (Greg's wife) came to visit and said: "Jane, don't worry, Ford and Greg are writing a new show and they're writing you a part as an old woman called Isa."

Both Jane and Mark skip straight to talking about the Live Shows at the SSE Hydro in Glasgow. This saw 21 shows in 2014 for 'Still Game Live', 15 in 2017 for 'Still Game Live 2' and eight shows for 'Still Game Live: The Final Farewell' in 2019. Every performance was a 13,000 sell-out audience - playing to over half-a-million people.

"We love live theatre; we're trained stage actors. There's much more fun to be had doing a live show," states Mark.

"During the last dress rehearsal on the afternoon before the first show, I tripped and fell on stage. I smashed my glasses, got a massive black eye, cut my face and I later discovered that I'd fractured my wrist. But, what could I do? I just had to go on stage and do the show." I can see the baffled look on Jane's face as she replays the moment in her head. This 'the show must go on' attitude was clearly developed at QMC all those years ago.

Mark continues: "At the same dress rehearsal, I'm doing my one-page monologue with not a person in the place and I remember saying to myself: "This is going to be a f\*\*king disaster. Who is going to come and be able to listen to this?" But, the audio was sensational and we had these massive high-definition screens. Technology helped it become a theatre show. You could not do that 20 years ago. That was quite amazing."

With all the hype surrounding the first live show, Jane reveals the intense nerves she was experiencing just moments before the show.

"The music was blaring; I could feel it in my chest - it was like a rock concert. I said to Mark, "What if it's terrible? What if I forget my lines?" I never worry about things like that but because it was so crazy, these doubts were there. And then Mark says to me: "Jane, you can do anything in those clothes." And that was the key. We all knew these characters so well. We were all so comfortable, no matter what."

"We got a round of applause for just walking onto the stage at every show - it was sensational," Mark exclaims with a huge smile, hands held high clapping above his head and follows up with a whoop and a cheer.

"I loved the Hydro, it was fantastic. But even when you're touring around in an old Corpy van doing TIE (Theatre in Education), you're still having the time of your life. Even if I hadn't done anything except for that, it was worth going to drama school - just to get up in the morning to do something you love," said Jane.

"Oh Mark, tell the story about when I said look who's in the audience," says Jane with raised eyebrows.

"I've never liked seeing the audience so I don't wear my glasses," Mark explains. "At the Hydro you can obviously see there is an audience 'cause there's thousands of them, but it just looks like a big blob to me. Jane says to me: "Do you see who's in the 5th row? Peter Kay and Paddy McGuinness!" and I say: "Shut Up! You're winding me up."

They reminisce about Peter Kay and Paddy McGuinness coming back stage and how they discovered that Peter is a Still Game fanatic - he knows every character, episode name, release dates - the lot. Jane also delights in telling me what Peter said to her when he and Paddy joined the cast for dinner: "It was the most exciting thing ever." Jane does a very good impression of Peter Kay: "Eh, eh Paddy? Get me, having me tea with Granny Murray!" A reference to Jane's role as Granny Murray in the children's TV show 'Me Too'.

We finish with Mark remembering that U2 wanted the Hydro but they couldn't get it "...cause we added extra shows? Mad!" Once again we're all chuckling. It's not many people who can say that they've kept U2 out of a venue, but Jane and Mark are one of the few. □

Jane McCarry - Diploma in Drama 1992 and BA Acting 1999  
Mark Cox - Diploma in Drama 1993. □

"Lots of people don't get the opportunity to go and do what they really want to do. That's always been very important to me, that I got the chance." Mark

"I loved the Hydro, it was fantastic. But even when you're touring around in an old Corpy van doing TIE (Theatre in Education), you're still having the time of your life. Even if I hadn't done anything except for that, it was worth going to drama school - just to get up in the morning to do something you love." Jane.





Thomas Kelly, Head of Development and Alumni Relations

# Changing Lives Through Philanthropy

**REALLY HOPE YOU'VE** enjoyed reading our 88th issue of QMYOU. When we sat down (virtually) to discuss this edition, we were in agreement that we wanted to celebrate the successes of our University, and our global community as a whole, during such a difficult time for all.

One important aspect of our community is our donors and the incredible impact they have had over the last year. Throughout the magazine we have celebrated support from the STV Children's Appeal and a local family charity (page 9), Santander's emergency COVID-19 support (page 9) as well as our Lydia Osteoporosis Project (page 24)

As we come to our final pages, it's a great opportunity to continue to celebrate the impact of philanthropy and explore ways in which you may want to play your part.



## Baillie Gifford Investment Managers

**B**AILLIE GIFFORD INVESTMENT Managers are one of our newest donors. Baillie Gifford has committed to supporting £10,000 per year towards our widening access agenda. This will fund three key areas of our access work: students from an estranged and ex-military background, as well as match-funding Robertson Trust scholars – more on the Robertson Trust below.

We were delighted to welcome our first Baillie Gifford scholars to QMU in September 2020.

"We have been impressed by QMU's breadth of work to widen participation to higher education. We are delighted to be supporting the bursaries and ensuring a university education is open to all, regardless of financial background"

**Sam Pattman**  
Sponsorship Manager at Baillie Gifford Investment Managers

## Robertson Trust – Journey to success

**W**E ARE INCREDIBLY thankful to the Robertson Trust, which continues to partner with QMU, to help the most promising youngsters overcome the financial and personal barriers to gain the QMU education they deserve and the career they aspire to.

In the academic year 2020/21 we were delighted to welcome four philanthropically matched-funded scholars to QMU, which was made possible thanks to donations from Santander, Baillie Gifford, Mark Laing and our University Principal, Sir Paul Grice.

**Robert Barron** (Robertson Trust Scholar)  
Scholar and 4th year BA (Hons) International Hospitality & Tourism Management student talking about his scholarship at our donors reception in March 2020



## Some of our wonderful donors meeting the amazing students they have supported

(March 2020)

Guests enjoy meeting students at the donor reception at the Dovecot Gallery



## Lisa Persdotter Simonyi

**W**E LOVE TO see our students give back. Lisa Persdotter Simonyi studied Corporate Communication at Queen Margaret University College (as it was then) and was part of the Class of 2002.

Since graduating, Lisa has moved to the USA and now supports QMU through the Lisa Persdotter Simonyi Fund, which you may remember we announced in QMYOU 86. The Fund supports QMU students looking to undertake an overseas exchange as part of their studies. We are delighted that Lisa continues to support students and we would like to say a massive thank you to Lisa. We hope we can welcome you back to our campus again soon.

"I have learned a lot about myself and I have grown. I am stronger, more confident, my interpersonal skills have improved and I am more resilient in facing my fears. I have also made lifelong friends and I will never forget this experience."

**Caoimhe Lillis Greally**,  
4th year BA (Hons) Nutrition student Supported to study at Chico State University, California in her third year.





# Supporting students facing financial hardship

**T**HE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has turned the lives of our students upside down with many facing financial difficulties for the first time and others being pushed further into hardship. The loss of essential part-time work and income has left many struggling to cope financially.

Our Student Discretionary (Hardship) Fund has been set up to support students who, through no fault of their own, are experiencing financial difficulties. Since the start of the pandemic, we have supported the increased demand from our students who find themselves in financial hardship.

In order to keep up with demand we need your help.

One of the greatest challenges our students face is the lack of vital part-time and full-time holiday work, with many experiencing a reduction in hours or the loss of a job altogether. This is particularly devastating for those who cannot access Government or furlough support, resulting in many students not being able to meet the costs of their rent, bills, food and essential expenses.

The pandemic has resulted in more students, from a broader range of backgrounds, finding themselves in positions where they cannot pay bills or afford to live. Not only has the number of students who need financial support increased but the amount of funding needed by students is much higher than ever before.

We are asking you today if you will help us support QMU students to deal with the longer-term impacts of the pandemic, by supporting our Student Discretionary Fund. □

Visit [qmu.ac.uk/alumni](https://qmu.ac.uk/alumni) to make a donation