Northumbria has been nominated for the prestigious University of the Year award in the influential Times Higher Education (THE) Awards 2017. Described as the ‘Oscars of UK Higher Education’, the awards attract hundreds of entries each year that exemplify talent, dedication and innovation across all aspects of university life. Northumbria is one of just six institutions to be shortlisted for the award, which recognises exceptional performance as well as bold, imaginative and innovative initiatives that have advanced the institution’s reputation during the academic year 2015/16. University of the Year is arguably the most significant and hard fought of all the categories – the award that all universities aspire to win. The nomination is therefore a clear acknowledgment of Northumbria’s continued focus on quality, which has enhanced the University’s global reputation for academic excellence. Progress was notable in 2015/16 with significant investment in research and teaching. Strong results in the latest Research Excellence Framework propelled Northumbria into the top 50 in the UK for research power. The University’s reputation has since been further enhanced through a significant investment in new multi-disciplinary research themes to facilitate ground-breaking research with real global impact. Experiential learning is a stylistic trait of Northumbria, and was clearly demonstrated with the launch of the Business Clinic in 2015/16, where students enhance their learning and employability by providing free consultancy advice to real business clients. This pioneering initiative previously contributed to Newcastle Business School at Northumbria securing the THE Business School of the Year award in 2015. A nursing scheme with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust allowing those with healthcare experience to become nurses in just 18 months was a UK-first, and an example of Northumbria responding to demand and leading the sector. Following the success of this initiative, a number of similar courses have been launched across the country by other institutions.
Northumbria ahead in latest National Student Survey

The National Student Survey (NSS) asks final year students at all UK universities to rate their experiences of studying at their chosen university. They are questioned on the quality of their course, the facilities they use and how they have been supported in their personal development, with their answers helping to influence the choice of university for prospective students.

Northumbria scored 85% overall satisfaction, higher than the sector overall average of 84%. In response to specific questions the University outperformed the sector in the application of information learned, opportunities to work with other students and the prompt provision of assessment feedback. The University’s IT and library resources were also rated higher than the sector average.

A number of Northumbria’s subjects were also highly rated for overall student satisfaction, including Human and Social Geography, which scored 90%, Physical Geography and Environmental Science scored 96%, and Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology scored 95%. Accounting, Psychology, and subjects Allied to Medicine all scored 94%.

Other subjects that scored 90% satisfaction or above include Architecture, Electronic and Electrical Engineering, History, Information Services, Journalism and Sociology. The NSS results follow the University securing a Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The award recognises the delivery of high-quality teaching, learning and results for Northumbria students, and consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK Higher Education.

Over the last 12 months, the University has also been making a significant £52m investment in the student experience including a new state-of-the art Computer and Information Sciences building and a new Architecture building, as well as a new centralised student service facility, Student Central.

Professor Peter Francis, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Northumbria University, said: “The result of the National Student Survey 2017 show that the strong emphasis placed by the University on education and learning continues to benefit our students, something the Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework recognised. “Northumbria is now in the top 50 institutions in the UK for Good Honours, outperforming the sector for the first time in 2015/16 and has also risen 30 places in the HESA Employment measure to now rank top in the North East.”

“We have outstanding students, and it is only right that we continue to invest in making their experience at Northumbria one of the best in the country.”
Student Central at City Campus
Library opens for business

An exciting new development which transforms the Student and Library Services space at City Campus has opened to students.

Over the last nine months, a multi-million pound investment has transformed the original 1969 Library into a light and airy space designed to host all of the award-winning support services that students need, in one place at the heart of campus. The new Student Central marks the next stage of the transformation of professional services dedicated to offering an outstanding student experience at Northumbria.

Ask4Help, located in the middle of Student Central, enables students to access face to face support around; accommodation, applying for jobs, assessments, change of student status, counselling, course information, disability, money and finance, using the University Library and more.

A new Student Central Commons area on the ground floor offers comfortable and informal spaces for group activity, and will host a range of events for students throughout the academic year, including employer presentations.

Speaking about the opening of this final phase of Student Central, Professor Jane Core, Director of Student and Library Services, said: "The completion of the Student Central project is really exciting, bringing further improvements in the way that students access our services and facilities. "Students previously had to navigate their way into support across 18 different locations or offices in nine buildings. Over the last 18 months we have introduced more consistent and seamless approaches to students accessing services by creating new teams, investing in technology, and so shaping new ways of working which puts students at the heart of what we do. With Student Central locations at City Campus East and Coach Lane Library now joined by the exciting development at City Campus Library our students will enjoy the best possible experience and have greater opportunities to excel in their time at Northumbria."

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The Student Central Commons which offers space for informal group work and events
We have developed technology that reliably detects the Ebola virus in a blood sample seven times faster, ten times cheaper and 700 times safer than doing it in a lab. In fact, the test can be used to detect any genetic material in blood, and so could be used to find everything from malaria to Zika.

Imagine tropical heat. You are wearing a thick, awkward plastic suit that covers you head to toe. Your only access to air is via a respirator; water comes in the form of your own sweat trickling down your eyes. You flex your fingers in your thick, plastic gloves, as you approach yet another person who could kill you: a suffering, feverish, wet patient who may have Ebola virus disease.

You must stick a needle into their vein, get a vial of blood and get it to a diagnostic laboratory. At the peak of the 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak, it took five days or more to get a result. By the time the West responded, this was reduced to between five and eight hours. At a cost of US$100 per test, however, the expense remained prohibitive. The average healthcare spend per person per year in oil-rich Nigeria is about US$118, but in Guinea, where the last Ebola outbreak started, it is just US$17. In the UK, it is about US$4,800.

When it comes to Ebola, testing a blood sample for the virus genome is the most reliable diagnostic method. The amount of virus can also tell you if the patient is likely to live or die. However, you first need to get to the genome of the virus and purify it, before the test itself can be applied.

Working on my own diagnostic technologies for lung diseases, I wondered how we could replace this manual, lab-based method with a simple, lab-free one. The goal was to radically cut time and cost, while not making the test less reliable. It was basic science that would lead me and my colleagues to the solution.

The device we developed, the Quantitative, Rapid Identification (QuRapID) platform, uses a simple principle: heat and colour. Freezing breaks up cells and spills their contents. Doing this on a machine (using a cheap Raspberry Pi computer), allows you to get to the genome of the Ebola virus without destroying it in the process.

Next, to measure how many copies of the virus are in a sample, you’d normally use a chemical reaction that produces a green dye – the greener the sample, the more virus is in it. Blood, however, absorbs green light and emits red light, hence its colour. Switching the chemical reaction components from producing a green dye to producing a specific shade of red means that we can now detect increases in that shade of red using a light sensor controlled by the Rapsberry Pi - the more of that shade of red there is in the drop of blood, the more virus there is.

Bring the freezing and red dye together and we can measure the virus straight in the drop of blood. The whole process is just five simple steps, and it takes 70 minutes or less – from pin prick to traffic light answer.

It’s not perfect, but it is fit for purpose. While lab-based methods can detect ten times less amounts of virus than the QuRapID platform, the levels of Ebola virus in the blood of patients with symptoms have so far been well above the lower detection limits of the QuRapID. We never got to test this on patients, though; instead, we tested it on cow blood spiked with live Ebola virus. In the 15 months it took us from August 2014 to turn the idea into a fully working instrument – confirmed to work with the live Ebola virus in November 2015 – the West Africa epidemic was practically over.

When another highly infectious disease, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), hit South Korea in August 2015, we calculated that a new test could be produced by public health agencies to use for mass screening within as little as two weeks. At this point, less than 12 months into our Ebola work, we had still not confirmed the QuRapID could do what we wanted. But, in the future, stockpiling instruments and tests for known high-risk diseases, such as Ebola virus disease, would make mass screening capacity available in a matter of days or even hours.

The Ebola virus is not the only threat, however. Some viruses, such as Zika, can cause disease at much lower levels of infection than those of Ebola virus, so the quest is now on to make this genetic testing platform even more sensitive, and to develop tests for other diseases threatening massive outbreaks.
Bringing learning to life

A pioneering interactive teaching facility at Northumbria’s Coach Lane Campus has received a £750,000 make over, which will ensure it continues to be one of the best of its kind in the country.

Established 15 years ago, the University’s Clinical Skills Centre uses the very latest technology to provide simulation-based education to students, enabling them to practice their skills in a realistic safe learning environment. The Centre is used extensively by undergraduate and pre-registration students, as well as by postgraduate and post-qualified medical, health and social care professionals as part of their continuing professional development.

The investment, completed this autumn, will increase the Centre’s capacity to deliver high quality real-life simulation training through an extensive range of flexible learning and teaching spaces. It will include four flexible simulation suites, each with their own control room and observation capability to enable assessors to view students’ progress and a dedicated simulation suite with an anaesthetic room, operating theatre, recovery room, observation and control room.

There will also be four simulated environments, including a ward and home setting and six flexible learning and teaching spaces that can change from a classroom or observation room to a skills laboratory or a simulation environment. The Centre will also include the latest virtual reality technology, enabling images and video to be projected onto three walls to ensure it is as realistic as possible and to provide a fully immersive, multi-sensory and interactive learning environment.

The upgrade complements the current extensive range of training and patient simulators with an array of new technology and equipment. These include a centre-wide telecommunication system, a full HD audio-visual system, with a series of fixed and mobile cameras, a success of interactive monitor displays, and virtual reality headsets.

Dr Alison Machin, Associate Professor in Nursing, Midwifery and Health said: “Northumbria boasts one of the most advanced skills environments for teaching and learning nationally and this additional investment will ensure we continue to be at the cutting edge of simulation learning.”

“The Centre’s ability to run three fully immersive virtual reality training environments simultaneously is unique in the North East and we are one of only a handful across the UK. Thanks to this investment, our students and professionals will receive the most realistic training environment possible bar none.”

Nursing expertise extended to Malta

Northumbria’s global reputation as a leading nursing education and training provider has led to further expansion in its international portfolio after the University was chosen to help deliver a new nursing degree in Malta.

Supported by the Maltese Government, Malta Enterprise and the Maltese Union of Midwives and Nurses, Northumbria will deliver a new full time three-year BSc (Hon) Nursing Studies degree programme in Malta, in collaboration with Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST). The programme is part of a new €2 million investment by Singapore company Vitals Global Healthcare, and will see 30 students trained each year during the first few years of the course; with plans to increase student numbers significantly over time. The first cohort of students will start this autumn.

Dr Alison Machin, Associate Professor in Nursing, Midwifery and Health, said: “We have an unrivalled reputation for academic excellence in nursing here at Northumbria and we are delighted to have developed this new partnership in Malta. As well as helping to train and educate Malta’s future nurses to the highest possible standards we are helping the Government improve the quality of healthcare by providing more nurses to assist with the country’s current shortage.”

Northumbria’s academics will be working alongside MCAST lecturers to deliver the new programme. Dr Silvio De Bono, President of the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, said: “Helping to address the shortage of nurses is a key priority for the Maltese Government. There is no doubt that Northumbria University is amongst the best in the world in developing nurses and nursing standards. Through this partnership with Northumbria we are confident we will be able to help address the nursing shortage and deliver a world-class degree programme.”

Northumbria University already delivers nursing programmes internationally in Asia and has an award-winning reputation for providing innovative, flexible and wide-ranging professional learning and development opportunities for those working in health. Established in 2001, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is the country’s leading vocational education and training institution. The College is currently building a new campus, which will accommodate over 10,000 full-time students every year once complete.
A new, world-class home for Northumbria University’s flagship Architecture degrees

Northumbria University has unveiled its stunning vision of a world-class new home for its flagship Architecture degrees.

Work has now begun to create the new, purpose-built studios at Northumbria’s City Campus in the heart of Newcastle in an extension of the University’s historic Grade II listed Sutherland Building.

Recognised by external examiners as being among the best in the UK, Architecture at Northumbria has an international reputation for excellence. Northumbria is ranked 3rd in the UK in the Complete University Guide 2018, with the Department of Architecture and Built Environment rated in the top 200 in the 2017 QS World University Rankings. The new studios have been designed by Page\Park Architects, winners of more than 150 national and international awards, who have liaised closely with Northumbria’s world-leading architecture staff and students on the proposal. Planning permission and listed building consent for the ambitious project was granted in the summer, with Durham-based Esh Group construction leading the build. The stunning new studios will feature over 1400m² of studio space, a new student hub, and academic staff offices.

Engineering and Environment, Associate Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Dr Simon Robson said: “This is an ambitious project to create a new home for our outstanding architecture degree programmes. Page\Park have designed a transformative scheme, blending the grandeur of the listed Sutherland Building entrance with modern teaching studios at the rear. The combination of world-leading academic programmes in world-leading accommodation will place Northumbria’s Architecture and Built Environment department in an enviable position in the sector.”

Professor Ruth Dalton, Head of Department for Architecture and Built Environment, said: “Page\Park...
Park Architects have produced an intelligent and sensitive scheme, knitting together the existing, historic Sutherland Building, with innovative, light-filled, flexible and stimulating studio spaces that will ensure the very highest student experience for our students for years to come.

“The project creates exciting new connections between the existing 1887 building by Dunn, Hansom and Dunn and the new studio extension, in the form of a new internal atrium and an external stepped terrace.”

Page\Park is a progressive employee-owned architecture practice committed to making a positive contribution to our built environment. Established in 1981, Page\Park has built a reputation for inventive contemporary architecture that stems from an understanding of history, people and place. With over 150 national and international design awards since its inception, Page\Park has won the Carbon Trust Award in Scotland twice, and has been shortlisted for the RIAS Andrew Doolan Award for Architecture four times, winning once in 2016 for the Maggie’s Centre Highlands and receiving a Special Commendation in 2010 for the McManus Galleries.

Marianne Partyka, at Page\Park Architects, said: “Page\Park are excited to be working with Northumbria University on the proposed alterations and extension to the Category II Listed Sutherland Building. The project will provide a new home for the Architecture and Built Environment department, providing studio and teaching space over two levels, transforming the ‘industrial’ courtyard to the rear of the building.”

In the latest UK wide research assessment exercise (Research Excellence Framework 2014), nearly half of Northumbria’s research outputs ranked world-leading or internationally excellent. The University is ranked top in the North East for sustained employment for Architecture graduates, both one and three years after graduation. Northumbria is also the highest-ranking university in the North East for both male and female earnings in Architecture, Building & Planning one year, three years and five years after graduation.

The Department of Architecture and Built Environment also has an excellent reputation for live student-industry projects, including the recent Land of Oak and Iron Centre in Gateshead and the proposed Angel of the North Visitors Centre. Our staff and students are also working around the world on international partnerships and collaborations in the likes of Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

The University’s Architecture and Built Environment academics are key founders and active members of the award-winning BIM Academy Enterprises (Ltd), a unique joint venture with Ryder Architecture Ltd, which was recently shortlisted for the Most Innovative Contribution to Business - University Collaboration category in the Times Higher Education Awards 2017. BIM Academy has worked on a number of high-profile projects in the UK and Europe, Middle East, Far East and Australasia. Its high-profile projects include the Sydney Opera House and the M+ Museum in Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Dr Oliver Jones, Programme Leader for Architecture, said: “The new space created will only serve to further enhance the international reputation of Architecture at Northumbria for providing an exemplary learning and teaching experience, it will ensure Northumbria remains at the forefront of architectural education within the UK.”

The exciting announcement of new Architecture Studios for the University comes as the latest news in Northumbria’s ambitious campus development plans, which has seen more than £250m invested in recent years. Northumbria’s Student Central building recently opened its doors and in early 2018, the University’s new Computer and Information Sciences building will be unveiled.
Space and sea to present new research opportunities

As one of the UK’s leading universities in aerospace medicine and rehabilitation, Northumbria University is delighted to be supporting the launch of the world’s first commercial space and deep sea research and training centre.

The £125 million Blue Abyss centre is being built at RAF Henlow in Bedfordshire. It will house the world’s biggest 50-metre-deep pool, an astronaut training centre with parabolic flight capability, a human performance lab, and hypobaric and hyperbaric chambers to enable astronauts, drivers and top athletes to perform at the peak of their potential.

Alongside ground-breaking astronaut training programmes, Blue Abyss will also offer a wide range of experiential ‘space preparation’ packages for ordinary people in advance of commercial spaceflight opportunities becoming available.

Northumbria academics are renowned for their work with the European Space Agency, conducting research into the best ways to rehabilitate astronauts following missions in space.

Orbiting in zero gravity has a significant physical impact on the body, with muscles wasting away as they are not used in the same way as on Earth. Although astronauts take part in up to two hours of exercise each day, they typically have to undergo rigorous rehabilitation to help them to stand up straight again. Dr Nick Caplan, Associate Professor of Musculoskeletal Health in the Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation, said: “We have been developing human spaceflight-related activities for almost 10 years here at Northumbria, within our Aerospace Medicine and Rehabilitation Laboratory. ‘We understand the challenges in accessing space environments for research and development, and Blue Abyss will soon be able to provide these. ‘We are excited about what the future holds for human spaceflight research in the UK, and here at Northumbria University, as we build a strong relationship with Blue Abyss.’

John Vickers, Chief Executive of Blue Abyss, said that the centre’s education outreach programme and collaboration with universities would help to shape a new generation of scientists and engineers, working with primary schools through to postgraduate and post-doctorate researchers. “Blue Abyss will provide a crucial offering to the STEM agenda in the UK by providing a truly exciting arena for science to be taught and experienced. “Our education provision will be vital to give students from across the UK, and the world the opportunity to work on real-world projects with internationally renowned academics that they would not have had access to otherwise.”

The centre will play a pioneering role in the growth of the UK’s space industry, with a government aim of a 10% share of the global space economy by 2030. It is expected to open in 2019.
Big Interview: Adam Dunlop

Choosing a university is one of the biggest decisions a young person will ever make, so ensuring they are properly informed is key to a university’s success. Promoting Northumbria to the outside world is the work of Northumbria’s marketing department, led by Marketing Director, and Northumbria alumnus, Adam Dunlop. Northumbria University News spoke to Adam about the work of the marketing team in the context of the changing Higher Education environment.

You joined Northumbria as Marketing Director nearly five years ago – what does your role involve and what do you enjoy most about it?

I lead the University’s marketing function – that includes everything from student recruitment, fundraising, corporate events, admissions, profile building, reputation management and market insight and research. I look at how marketing as a whole can help Northumbria achieve its mission, aims and ambitions – to attract the best students and industry partners, tell our fantastic story locally, nationally and internationally about how we connect with our wonderful students as they move onto their lives beyond the University.

My role is very diverse and the Higher Education sector is a really exciting and challenging place to work – there are not many jobs where you have your ‘customer’ on site 24 hours a day (just go to the library if you don’t believe me). Northumbria’s ambition and our willingness to pursue excellence in everything we do also makes this an inspirational place to be.

You’ve worked across a variety of sectors – how does Higher Education differ from other industries?

I’m a Northumbria alumnus myself and after studying for an MBA in the Business School here, I worked with different businesses across both the public and private sector, including in a senior global leadership position within Procter & Gamble’s strategic marketing team. There is no doubt the Higher Education sector is unique. There are big challenges, including increased competition, both from other universities and alternative higher education providers, as well as the impact of demographic and regulatory changes. However, it is also a very rewarding sector to work in – the people are passionate about what they do and the ground-breaking research which takes place here at Northumbria is having a real impact across the world. Choosing a university is a big decision, meaning the role of marketing within Higher Education is very different to other sectors. Our job is to provide prospective students with the information and support they need to make one of the biggest decisions of their lives.

The Higher Education sector is getting more competitive – what sets Northumbria apart from other universities?

Our strategy is about quality and pursuing excellence in everything we do, with the student at the heart of this. We are a new kind of excellent university, offering more than just a quality academic experience. We offer a wide range of opportunities to work with industry, contribute to the local community through societies or volunteering, excel at or simply have fun in sport, be part in an outstanding student union – all of these build contacts and skills that set our students apart. We were recently shortlisted for the Times Higher Education University of the Year award, a fantastic achievement and one which comes in the same year that we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Northumbria gaining university status. This is therefore an ideal time for us to tell our story and talk about where we’ve come from and where we’re going. At Northumbria, we are not afraid to set our own direction and nor are our students – many of whom go on to run their own businesses. We have our own, distinct way of delivering a first class, rounded experience to our students and other stakeholders, and that is what sets us apart from other universities.

What role does the marketing department play in promoting Northumbria as a research rich, business focussed university?

Put simply, to communicate to more people – potential students, parents, research partners, businesses and so on – locally, nationally and internationally about how we have developed and changed over the last 5-10-20 years. We have adapted to become a new kind of excellent university, but many of our customers and stakeholders are not yet aware of this. We are fortunate that we have great people in place who are passionate about what they do, recognise there is competition, and who have the skills and knowhow to respond. Keeping up-to-date with the latest technologies is essential if we are to communicate effectively and engage with different audiences, and we are consistently innovating, investing in new systems and ways of working. Digital media is now used more and more to communicate our message, alongside more traditional channels. We are building our profile through the fantastic teaching and research going on at Northumbria. Our academics are now regularly being interviewed by national and international broadcasters, and writing for global audiences, cementing Northumbria’s reputation worldwide. Our students are one of our biggest assets and engaging our student body is key to our future success. Within the Marketing department we employ student interns each year, who work on a wide variety of projects including filming and photography, events, digital marketing and supporting campaigns such as Clearing and our annual degree shows. We have a team of graduate ambassadors, many of whom then go on to build successful careers in marketing and other areas, and we also engage current students as Digital Content Creators, who write blog posts, take photos and produce videos for our online and social media channels.

What do you consider to be the greatest challenges that lie ahead for universities and the Higher Education sector in general?

The ability to adapt to an increasingly competitive environment, respond to the changing political and regulatory environment, and in doing so keep our core product of research and teaching relevant to new generations. Over the coming years we know there will be a demographic change, with fewer 18 year olds, therefore potentially fewer undergraduate applicants. We have a shrinking market, but our focus is always on quality and that will not change. We have seen similar fluctuations in student numbers in countries such as Australia and the US and during those dips it was clear that marketing played an even more important role, with the adoption of new marketing methodologies even more critical to a university’s success. We pride ourselves in staying one step ahead.

You are a Northumbria graduate yourself – why did you choose Northumbria and how has the University changed over the years?

I chose to study at Northumbria because of its outstanding links with industry and it was those links that helped me secure a marketing role in Procter & Gamble. I found that the course was innovative and the support from the academic staff and focus on employability and career development was excellent. I moved around a lot before coming to Newcastle – living in Cumbria, Lancashire, Scotland and the Midlands. However, I loved Newcastle as a city from the moment I arrived and having come to the North East to study at Northumbria, I never left. I’ve had, and am still having, a fabulous career, and got married and brought up my children here too. There have been many changes over the years – the campus itself is very different to when I was a student and that investment in facilities is continuing. I also think Northumbria is even more vibrant now and plays an even bigger role in the city and community.

If you had to describe Northumbria in three words, what would they be?

Ambitious, vibrant, warm.

Marketing Director Adam Dunlop
Dangers of digital hoarding

Researchers at Northumbria have been awarded funding to explore the cybersecurity risks of digital hoarding, also known as e-hoarding.

Digital hoarding is caused by not deleting or filing emails and other electronic material properly. This can have a major impact on efficiency and cost businesses significant amounts of money as employees sift through unnecessary data. It can also have an environmental impact, with organisations increasing their carbon footprint as a result of having to back up lots of information and data, which is no longer required. Digital hoarding also has a cybersecurity risk as people can access and use information illegitimately.

Extensive research has been carried out into physical hoarding, however very little research has been done into the modern day equivalent; digital hoarding. Funded by the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), the Northumbria project will look into why people board data and information digitally, the impact on organisations and how those behaviours can be changed.

Dr Nick Neave, Associate Professor of Psychology, is leading the research. He said: “We all know how frustrating it is when you can’t find what you are looking for; even more so in today’s digital age. Not being able to find that document, image or email you need is not only frustrating, but costs organisations time and money and can cause stress and anxiety for those involved.

This study is the first to explore the characteristics of digital hoarding; examining who is hoarding, why and what can be done to change their behaviour in order to reduce the risk, and in turn help staff and employers. We hope the findings will also help people in their normal lives too as our use and reliance on digital technology continues to increase.”

The project will involve carrying out a survey of employees at a number of large organisations, including local authorities, universities and emergency services; initially to identify hoarders, their characteristics and the extent of hoarding symptoms. Those individuals who score highly on digital hoarding will then be invited to take part in focus groups to look in more detail at their digital hoarding behaviour, as well as how this could be changed.

Researchers hope that the findings will help organisations develop and refine their digital storage, data protection and digital security policies, and preserve their commercial integrity.

Dr Nick Neave has received funding to research the cybersecurity risks of digital hoarding

Northumbria cleans up at Digital Marketing Awards

Students from Newcastle Business School have swept the board at a major marketing awards event, beating rivals from across the UK.

The Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing (IDM) Student Marketing Competition attracted more than 80 teams from UK universities. Teams were asked to pitch a marketing campaign for The Economist on how to attract more female subscribers to the globally influential publication. Students from Newcastle Business School enjoyed an unprecedented night of success with the three teams entered claiming first, second, and third place.

Entering the competition gives students the chance to work on a challenging and real-life assignment. It is also used by lecturers as a valuable teaching resource on marketing and business courses. Newcastle Business School undergraduate team, Be Heard, made up of Alice Oliver, Victoria Buxton, and Sam Brooks was named overall winner for its campaign pitch, which focused on creative ways to engage more with a female audience. Second place went to Kristina Kramer, Sanae Uchinaka, Ixora Yoon, Kieran MacNamara, and Natasha Christou, while Sinead Linsley, Emerra Bahari, Nicola Wood, Paige Wheeler, and Ella Thackray took third.

Dr Vignesh Yoganathan, Senior Lecturer in Marketing at Newcastle Business School, said: “This is a truly outstanding result by all our teams, and one I’m sure will be incredibly difficult to better. The IDM Awards is a prestigious event and a powerful platform for the students to showcase their talents. It also attracts major sponsors, and the success of our students will no doubt enhance their CVs and career prospects.

“Judges from The Economist also praised the teams for distinguishing themselves with pitches that were of industry standard and above, and for displaying highly employable skills. Indeed, as well as receiving a winning cheque for £1,500, the team from Be Heard were so impressive that they have now been invited to The Economist’s offices in London to assist with creative marketing. This is a fabulous opportunity!”

Professor John Wilson, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Business and Law at Northumbria, added: “We are all immensely proud of this achievement. It reflects both the quality of students we have at Newcastle Business School and of the quality of the teaching we offer.”
Northumbria takes centre stage as a global pioneer in clinic-based learning

Northumbria Law School recently played host to more than 170 academics from more than 25 countries at an international conference on clinical legal education.

Inspired by the International Journal of Clinical Education (IJCLE) – a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Northumbria – conferences have been held since 2003 for law academics from around the world to discuss developments in clinic-based learning. This year it was hosted by Northumbria Law School, which is recognised internationally for its pioneering Student Law Office where final year students provide legal assistance to real clients. Running since the early 1990s and one of the largest of its type, the Student Law Office has represented more than 3,300 clients and secured over £1 million on their behalf since 2008.

The annual IJCLE conferences are devoted to the innovative field of clinical legal education. This year it was hosted by Northumbria Law School, and Derek Johnson from the Department of Geography, will join colleagues from educational institutions around the world to study tensions between having privacy while also maintaining the ability to fight crime on the internet. The research will also look at ways of ensuring the effective and efficient collection of evidence from international criminal activity.

The Dark Web is a collection of websites that exist on an encrypted network and cannot be found by using traditional search engines or visited by using traditional browsers. The growth of cybercrime, including illicit trading on the Dark Web, is creating new challenges for the police and the courts.

Northumbria Law School Senior Lecturer Adam Jackson highlighted an example of these challenges in the form of the acceptance of non-traditional methods of evidence collection, such as digital capture, by the courts. Adam also explains how their research will be looking at "how police activity against cybercrime can strike the right balance between protecting society and respecting legitimate privacy rights."

Geography Department Senior Lecturer Derek Johnson, an expert in crime data, recording and investigatory practices in the digital environment, said that the rapid advancement of technology over time has also advanced the nature of criminal opportunity. He added that this work will seek to further understand these advancements by relevant justice agencies “in order to fulfil community needs of prevention, detection and justice provision.”

The research and the work of the Northumbria Centre for Evidence and Criminal Justice Studies (NCECJS) spark national interest having been discussed in the House of Commons Justice Committee by Northumbria Law School’s Professor Tim Wilson. At a more local level other members of the NCECJS have worked on police training in County Durham as well as for work with the Forensic Science Regulator finding ways to improve reliability testing of crime scene evidence in legal proceedings.

Professor John Wilson, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Business and Law at Northumbria, on traditional degree courses and our increased interest having been discussed in the House of Commons Justice Committee by Northumbria Law School’s Professor Tim Wilson. At a more local level other members of the NCECJS have worked on police training in County Durham as well as for work with the Forensic Science Regulator finding ways to improve reliability testing of crime scene evidence in legal proceedings.

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Global recognition for Northumbria scientist

A Northumbria academic, whose research has had a major impact on public health policies around the world, has received a prestigious award for his contribution to alcohol studies.

Nick Heather, an Emeritus Professor of Alcohol and Other Drug Studies in Northumbria’s Department of Psychology, has been chosen as this year’s winner of the 2017 Jellinek Award, established in memory of Dr EM Jellinek’s great contribution to the field of alcohol studies. Each year the Jellinek Memorial Award recognises a scientist from any country around the world who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the alcohol/alcoholism field.

After working as a clinical psychologist in the NHS, Professor Heather developed the Addictive Behaviours Research Group at the University of Dundee and in 1987 became founding Director of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. Professor Heather returned to the UK in 1994 as Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the Newcastle City Health NHS Trust and as Director of the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Studies.

He took up his present position at Northumbria on retirement from the NHS in 2003. Professor Heather has a long-standing interest in research on addictive disorders, with an emphasis on the treatment of alcohol problems. He has over 500 publications, including books, chapters, articles in scientific journals and reports, mostly in the field of addictions.

“I am absolutely delighted to receive this award and I regard it as a great honour,” he said. “It is a tribute to my work; however, I hope that a lot of other people who have influenced my ideas, and those I have worked with over the years, will see it as a tribute to their achievements as well.”

Professor Heather presents evidence and theories intended to challenge the notion that alcoholism is a disease. In 1981 he co-authored the book Controlled Drinking, which looked at a large number of studies that found some dependent drinkers were able to return to problem-free drinking. He followed this up with the book Problem Drinking, which explored alcohol problems and their interpretation and repeatedly set out evidence to contest the disease concept of alcoholism.

Speaking about his research, Professor Heather added: “I began my research 40 years ago and have maintained a critique of the notion of alcoholism, particularly as a disease. I have also challenged the idea that the only solution to an alcohol problem is to become abstinent from alcohol altogether.

“Nobody is suggesting that alcohol dependence isn’t a very serious issue and I’m certainly not suggesting that in severe cases abstinence may not be necessary for recovery – but the evidence is quite clear that most people with less severe problems can reach a stable situation by drinking in a harm-free way.”

Professor Heather was instrumental in the development of the “brief intervention” approach to non-dependent problem drinkers, which is now a key alcohol public health policy in many countries across the globe, including the UK, Sweden, Finland and the US. Delivered by GPs and other frontline professionals, it works by identifying people who are drinking too much for their own health and welfare, and offering them some advice on their drinking habits, helping them to cut down and drink in a safer way.

Professor Harold Kalant, Jellinek Memorial Fund President, said: “The Jellinek Fund Board of Directors is delighted to offer its congratulations to Professor Heather for this richly deserved honour. He has made many outstanding contributions to the field of alcohol studies, including the use of brief interventions in the treatment of alcohol problems. This year’s Jellinek Award, however, specifically recognises the great importance of his research and conceptual contributions to the understanding of the interaction of individual and socio-cultural factors in the origin, management and prevention of alcoholism. Altogether a remarkable career.”

Northumbria announces new BALTIC Professor

Artist and writer Professor Andrea Phillips has been named as the new director of the BxNU research institute – an innovative partnership between Northumbria University and BALTIC Centre of Contemporary Art.

Established in 2012, the BxNU (BALTIC x Northumbria University) Institute is based at BALTIC 39 in the centre of Newcastle and was created to bring together education, professional practice and world-class research in a unique space for students. In her new role, Professor Phillips will direct the activities of the institute and help develop the partnership between Northumbria and BALTIC as it enters a new phase.

She joins Northumbria from the prestigious Valand Academy at the University of Gothenburg, where she was Professor of Art. Prior to this, she was Professor of Fine Art at Goldsmiths University, leading PhD programmes in Art and Curating. She succeeds Professor Christine Boerland in the role.

Speaking about her appointment, Professor Phillips said: “The collaboration between Northumbria University and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art represents a critical opportunity for us to reframe the ways in which higher education institutions, arts centres and their overlapping constituencies can work together.

“My vision of BxNU is as a site of radical experimentation, using artistic and curatorial tools, which will come to exemplify ways of working with and learning from communities that are based on practices of social, financial, educational equality and desegregation. Building on the long historical tail of committed political and social activism in the North East, I hope that BxNU will demonstrate that the arts sector and arts education in the UK need not be driven by meritocratic imperatives.”

Professor Tom Lawson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Arts, Design and Social Sciences) at Northumbria, said: “We’re delighted to announce Andrea as our new BALTIC professor. Her appointment marks a new phase in our partnership with BALTIC and demonstrates our joint ambition to attract the very best academics and practitioners from around the world to the region.

Under Andrea’s leadership we will extend the international reach of Arts at Northumbria and of our ground breaking partnership with BALTIC.”

Northumbria has a global reputation for excellence in the Arts with its degree programmes in this area recently rated Top 18 in the UK for 2018, Top 10 in the UK for Art and Design research, and in the Top 301-400 for Arts and Humanities in the world.
Skilled and emergency procedures in healthcare settings. Students can learn at the University with their own nursing students and the knowledge and skills they have learned at the University with Northumbria and will share the third time that the delegation from Boromarajonani College of Nursing, in southern Thailand, spent two weeks at Boromarajonani College, making back to Thailand.”

Cathy Bailey, Associate Professor, Nursing at Northumbria University, North Tyneside Council, said: “In the UK many older people live independently at home but with age, there is a greater risk of living with debilitating long-term conditions such as dementia, heart disease and limited mobility. Being able to get on with everyday activity and be connected locally and socially, can help maintain health and a good quality of life.”

“Timely, affordable, usable and well-maintained home adaptations, from hand rails to stair lifts, can support such independence and delay a move to supported housing. Alongside robust research, more needs to be known about the lived reality of home adaptations for older people from different backgrounds and housing tenure. For example, what are their experiences of home adaptations? What helps or hinders finding advice and support? What about cost? How do older people decide what’s best? And what impacts do home adaptations have on everyday life?”

Hearing from providers and practitioners, from those working in local authority to a ‘handyperson’, is also important to understand how home adaptations are perceived, used and maintained and thus how future provision may be improved.”

The Centre for Ageing Better believes that later life can be a period of opportunity, in which people are active, healthy and connected. It is committed to evidence-based research, to bring about change that improves lives, tackling inequality and placing the views and voices of real people at the heart of their work.

Rachael Docking, Senior Evidence Manager, the Centre for Ageing Better said: “With the majority of older people living in existing housing it is essential for us to look for the best solutions to adapting current housing stock. Through gathering evidence from experienced practitioners, who witness the challenges people face every day, and people (and their carers), who live with these challenges every day, we can bridge the gap between published research and the real world.”

Findings from the study are due to be published later in 2017.

Ageing better with Northumbria

Experts in ageing at Northumbria University are leading research to understand the role of home adaptations in improving later life.

Northumbria shares nursing expertise with Thai visitors

Northumbria demonstrated its state-of-the-art simulation-based learning to Thai medical experts when they visited the University during the summer.

A delegation from Thailand’s Ministry of Public Health saw how the University uses simulation-based education as a learning and teaching method for a variety of healthcare settings. Fifteen nurse educators from Boromarajonani College of Nursing, in southern Thailand, spent two weeks at Northumbria and will share the knowledge and skills they have learned at the University with their own nursing students and nurse educators.

Simulation-based education is often used in healthcare teaching. It encompasses a broad range of methods, including patient simulators that can breathe and display a range of altered cardiac and respiratory conditions. The simulators can also be programmed to simulate a range of illnesses frequently found in a healthcare setting. Students can then practice and perform many skills and emergency procedures in a safe environment, ensuring they are competent, safe and confident to deliver high quality care. This is the third time that the delegation from Thailand have attended the two-week programme at Northumbria. Professor Greta Defeyter, Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Northumbria’s Health and Life Sciences faculty, said: “We have considerable expertise in the area of simulation-based education with many of our academics having national and international profiles in the development and delivery of this learning and teaching methodology. “This also includes pedagogical research into this field. The Clinical Skills Centre at Northumbria has been a centre of excellence for many years providing high quality state of the art simulation-based education. We also have a reputation for excellence in the delivery of simulation-based education training for educators providing one-to-two day bespoke programmes, such as this most recent overseas visit, as well as degree and master’s level modules in simulation-based education.”

Soraya Niha Benyala, Senior Lecturer in Midwifery at Boromarajonani College, said: “This is the first time that I’ve seen simulation-based education in the UK and I think the atmosphere for learning and teaching is fantastic at Northumbria. The equipment is of the highest quality and the support for staff who deliver simulation-based learning is very good.

“I have enjoyed the teaching very much and I will be taking a lot of what I have learned back to Thailand.”

The University has recently invested £750,000 in its Clinical Skills Centre, making it one of the biggest of its kind in the country.

Discover more

www.northumbria.ac.uk/nursing
Northumbria University News takes a look inside the University Library following its transformation as part of the continuing £52m campus investment.

With stylish interiors, impressive new vistas of the campus, and natural light throughout, Northumbria’s new library learning and research spaces at City Campus have welcomed students for the first time.

Alongside the multi-million pound investment that has created Student Central, the first floor of the University Library at City Campus has been transformed for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Students can now enjoy a new technology-rich reading room, providing a mix of individual and collaborative learning spaces and breakout areas in the bright and airy extension. A dedicated space for Masters Students has also been created adjacent to an all-new Research Commons for postgraduate research students and faculty colleagues.

Northumbria’s 24/7 University Library achieves some of the highest levels of student satisfaction in the UK and has held Cabinet Office accreditation for Customer Service Excellence since 2010. The University Library ensures students receive the right support they need from enrolment to graduation by providing a comprehensive range of physical, digital services and resources, enabling greater access to knowledge and professional support for the development of crucial information, literacy and study skills.

DISCOVER MORE
www.northumbria.ac.uk/library

TURN TO PAGE 3
To read about the new Student Central at City Campus Library.
Images from inside the new-look University Library.
Pioneering nurse education

Earlier this year Northumbria welcomed the second intake of students embarking on an innovative new 18-month UK nursing course. The programme, first launched in 2016 with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, was the first of its kind in the UK and has since been replicated by other universities and NHS Trusts across the country.

Traditionally a three-year qualification, the 18-month nursing course is aimed at people with a healthcare background and leads to a BSc (Hons) Nursing Studies/Registered Nurse (Adult) degree, recognised by professional regulatory body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

The second intake comprises ten new student nurses, who will carry out a mixture of classroom-based teaching, simulated clinical skills and hands-on practical experience in hospitals and the community. They join Northumbria as the first intake of students prepare to graduate this autumn.

Professor Pam Dawson, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Strategic Workforce Planning and Development at Northumbria University, said: “Due to the success of the first course we are delighted to extend the programme to a further group of nursing students. “The course with Northumbria Healthcare is a real trailblazer. Northumbria University has a long-standing excellent reputation for delivering high quality innovative nurse education and training. This programme uses a new approach of workplace-based coaching to support student nurses’ teaching and learning, keeping quality of patient care at the forefront.”

Northumbria Healthcare, which runs hospitals and community services in Northumberland and North Tyneside, is funding the degree places and has guaranteed all the students an interview once they graduate. Debbie Reape, Interim Executive Director of Nursing at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said: “Our 18-month nurse training programme caused quite a stir in the nursing world when it was launched and we are delighted with how our recruits are progressing, thanks to their hard work and determination and our excellent partnership with Northumbria University. “Like every trust in the country we continue to face recruitment challenges and we are passionate about building on our strong foundations of nurse training and playing our part in developing the workforce of the future. This latest intake of student nurses shows our continued support to nurse education and it is flattering to know that so many are now following our lead.”

In a recent monitoring visit by the Nursing and Midwifery Council the course was highly commended in verbal feedback.

www.northumbria.ac.uk/nursing

New insight into life-threatening childhood brain cancer

Research by academics at Northumbria and Newcastle Universities has found that the most common type of childhood cancer is actually made up of seven separate conditions, each requiring different treatment.

Childhood medulloblastoma is the most common brain tumour affecting young people. It is estimated that around 650 patients are diagnosed each year in the EU. Children with this cancer are currently given a combination of surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy, which cause numerous debilitating side effects and other consequences, such as lower IQ and social problems.

Up until recently there had only been four recognised subtypes of the disease. However, researchers have discovered there are actually seven subtypes, each with their own biological and clinical characteristics, and each needing different treatment. It is hoped that the findings will give young patients more personalised treatment programmes and new drug options in the future. Gentler therapies could be used for children with a good prognosis, while the most intense treatments could be reserved for those with high-risk tumours.

Dr Ed Schwalbe, Senior Lecturer in Bioinformatics and Biostatistics at Northumbria, said: “These new subtypes are characterised by better survival rates for some children but sadly also worse outcomes for others. This research could therefore lead to new clinical trials, to better help clinicians decide on optimal treatments for their patients, focusing on reducing treatment side effects in patients with a good prognosis, and continuing to aggressively treat patients with a worse prognosis.”

Steve Clifford, Professor of Molecular Paediatric Oncology at the Wolfson Childhood Cancer Research Centre, Newcastle University, said: “Medulloblastoma is a devastating condition that causes approximately 10 percent of all childhood cancer deaths. Our research has provided critical new insights into the cancer’s molecular basis and it is a significant step forwards in enhancing our understanding of this life-threatening disease. This new discovery allows us to undertake studies to see how we could use these insights in diagnosis and to personalise treatments according to the biological features of each patient’s tumour.”

Cancer Research UK and The Brain Tumour Charity provided funding for the study. Dr Catherine Pickworth, Cancer Research UK’s science information officer, said: “Improving the way we treat cancer is a priority, especially as many children who survive cancer will live with long-term side effects of their treatment. It’s vital that we make treatment both better and kinder, and this study is a positive step forward in achieving this. The next steps will be to look at which treatments help each subgroup the best, so we can tailor treatment for every child with medulloblastoma.”

www.northumbria.ac.uk/health
Tackling childhood obesity

A research project to help tackle obesity in young people, carried out by Northumbria University academics, has led to a new training programme for school nurses across the UK.

In 2016, the World Health Organisation stated that childhood obesity was one of the most challenging public health problems of recent times, with the number of obese children increasing globally at an alarming rate. Obesity increases the risk of a number of long-term health conditions, including high blood pressure, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, as well as potential mental health problems.

In response, Northumbria academics have been working with the School and Public Health Nurses Association to carry out research into the issue. The joint study, funded by the Burdett Trust for Nursing, involved a review of all relevant literature on the subject as well as a survey of young people in North Tyneside and school nurses across the UK.

Findings revealed that young people felt they did not have enough information on healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. They also said the information currently available wasn’t in a format that was easy to understand. The survey highlighted the important role schools should have in promoting healthy eating and exercise, as well as issues around the cost and availability of healthy foods.

Body image and stereotypes were also seen as an issue, along with fads. Peers and parents were viewed as important in helping to change young people’s behaviour. A survey of school nurses identified similar findings with the nurses recognising they have a key role to play in working with young people and parents on the issue of obesity. However, the school nurses felt their work was currently reactive rather than preventative and that they could do more proactively to help promote healthy eating.

The findings also highlighted the important role schools play, in particular Physical Education provision and the food available to students. They recognised that more information, training and resources would help them carry out their roles more effectively.

As a result of the research, a training pack has been produced for school nurses across the UK to help them educate secondary school pupils about healthy eating. The pack was developed with input from young people, includes games and a motivational film showcasing the best ways of talking to young people about health and exercise. It is being delivered to school nurses as part of a national training programme. An app, ‘Health in Hand’, will also be launched this autumn. Developed by young people for young people, it includes quizzes, recipes, personal goals and myth busters, and aims to encourage sustainable changes in behaviour.

Victoria Gilroy, Senior Lecturer in Specialist Community Public Health Nursing Health Care at Northumbria, led the research. She said: “Obesity in young people is a serious public health issue and one which is predicted to get significantly worse, without any intervention. Our research is quite unusual in that it targets today’s young people in order to change the behaviour of their future children. Young people are more open and amenable to change due to their stage of development so it’s an ideal time to target health interventions and support programmes. They have been involved throughout the research project, as they are key to helping us understand the issues and what will and won’t work to help change their behaviour.”

She continued: “School nurses have a key role in supporting young people and promoting healthy eating and healthy lifestyles, but many feel they don’t have the skills or resources to do this. This has led to the development of the training pack and course and we will be carrying out further research to find out what impact this has had.”

North Tyneside Council have supported the research project. Wendy Burke, the Council’s Director of Public Health, is featured on the film. She said: “We are delighted to work in partnership with Northumbria University on this project. We have an epidemic of obesity in the UK. It is crucial that we engage with young people on healthy eating and healthy choices to turn the tide. We live in an obesogenic environment which means it is now much more difficult to maintain a healthy weight than it is to become overweight or obese. It has never been more important to tackle this to ensure future generations have long and healthy lives. If we equip young people, future parents, with the knowledge and information to make healthy choices we can help break the obesity cycle.

Tackling this issue is tough and no one organisation can do it on their own; we all need to work together for the sake of our future generations and we need to involve young people.”

Sharon White, Professional Officer at the School and Public Health Nurses Association, said: “School nurses are instrumental in helping to tackle this issue. The research project has led to some really interesting findings and I’ve no doubt the training pack and training course will be a great asset to school nurses.”

DISCOVER MORE

www.northumbria.ac.uk/health
Business School praised for ‘high merit’ programme

An innovative education programme at Newcastle Business School has received a prestigious seal of approval from the British Academy of Management (BAM) Education.

The Business Clinic, part of Northumbria University’s award-winning Business School, has been ‘Highly Commended’ by the BAM awards panel 2017 for its role in bringing students and real businesses together. Judges described the Business Clinic as being of ‘high merit’ and ‘at the heart of the curriculum, by replacing the traditional dissertation with a collaboration between students and business to produce real solutions and new perspectives that are underpinned by rigorous theory and research’.

Nigel Coates, Director of the Business Clinic, said: “Since we created the Business Clinic four years ago we have seen over 600 students work with and advise more than 145 organisations. We are extremely proud to have provided consultancy advice to a great variety of organisations in a diverse range of areas, from marketing and finance to operations and HR.

“To receive national recognition from the UK’s leading authority on the academic field of management for the design and delivery of the Business Clinic scheme reinforces our pioneering approach to business management education. Through the scheme we aim to give our students a valuable opportunity to develop advantageous skills informed by cutting-edge business research and improve their chances of securing highly-desirable jobs when they graduate.”

Graduate intern in the running

The company set up by North East legend Brendan Foster and behind the world-famous Great North Run has accelerated expansion plans by recruiting a Northumbria graduate.

History graduate Susie Brown was able to join sporting events specialist The Great Run Company following financial support from the Northumbria Enterprise Business Support (NEBS) project. This provides European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to help pay for six-month graduate internships.

As an event administrator, Susie will initially support a team of managers, but the company plans to broaden her role and responsibilities as she builds up knowledge and skills.

Rebecca Brown, HR Manager at The Great Run Company, said: “When Brendan Foster organised the first Simplyhealth Great North Run in 1981 it must have been difficult to imagine that 36 years later it would be one of the biggest mass-participation sporting events on earth. Today, this famous half-marathon is just one of more than 30 annual events we organise. “As well as a core team of 80 staff, we work with a range of partners, contractors, specialist crew and volunteers to help us deliver our events. Ensuring we have enough people with the right skills set to make this all happen can be a challenge. Susie can provide dedicated administrative support to the managers, while also keeping open a career path for her in event management.

“The support from Northumbria is great for us. We are introducing a new role for the business and financial help for the first six months, assists us in assessing the requirements of the role and the person.”

Victor Ottaway, Graduate Internship Manager at NEBS, said: “The overall aim of the NEBS ERDF grant is to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses can access help to invest in their next generation of talent. The Great Run Company’s graduate development strategy complements this perfectly, so that together we can help the business expand sustainably and create employment for a high calibre graduate.”

Northumbria Enterprise Business Support

The Northumbria Enterprise Business Support (NEBS) project provides financial support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to employ graduate interns. NEBS can also support students and recent graduates to start and grow their own business.

The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Through the internship strand of the scheme, SMEs can access help to invest in their next generation of talent. NEBS provides financial support for small and medium-sized businesses that can be a challenge. Susie can provide dedicated administrative support to the managers, while also keeping open a career path for her in event management.

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European Union

European Regional Development Fund

Northumbria looking to recruit graduate talent can apply to NEBS for a £3,825 ERDF grant. This is used to contribute to the salary costs of a six-month paid internship.

For more information about graduate internship funding contact Victor Ottaway, Graduate Internship Manager, on 0191 227 4044 or email victor.ottaway@northumbria.ac.uk.

Visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/business for more on the University’s support for business and enterprise.
Organic advice sows seeds of success

You might think an organic farmer would know just how to grow things, but when it came to growing his business, he turned to Northumbria.

The Business Clinic is a free consultancy and advice service provided by students in the University’s Business School. Available to a range of organisations from SMEs and charities to multinationals, businesses are able to present students with a problem that they need help with. Working in teams, the students will analyse the problem, consider possible solutions and provide a detailed report and presentation of their recommendations to the client.

Family-run fruit and vegetable producer, Hexhamshire Organics, contacted the Business Clinic to get help evaluating their options as they looked to explore areas for growth. The business was launched four years ago by Bob and Ann Paton after they purchased their dream home which came with six acres of land. They secured organic legitimacy from the Soil Association and now cultivate fruit and vegetables which are sold at local markets and direct to customers, as well as rearing rare-breed Tamworth pigs.

Now that the business is off the ground, they are keen to grow the organic company and asked Northumbria’s Business Clinic for advice on the best avenues to take. Undergraduate students Matthew Lynn, Niamh Whelan, Jonathan Dineen and Andrew Fleming impressed Bob and Ann with their research methods and attention to detail in helping them understand what they wanted their business to achieve. They visited the farm, attended markets, talked to clients and potential clients and helped the Patons to understand how they could better promote their products to their target audience.

Bob said: “Working with the students was great. They were very nice, very enthusiastic, and wanted to learn all about us, and what we wanted to achieve. I was really surprised by the standard of work completed, and particularly by the final document we received. It was very thorough with excellent, well-researched recommendations. I honestly didn’t expect to receive something so professional.”

Northumbria’s award-winning Business School was named Times Higher Education’s UK Business School of the Year in 2015. More recently, it was the first Business School in the North East of England to win the Small Business Charter for services to SMEs. Since the Clinic’s launch in 2013, students have provided pro bono advice and recommendations to almost 150 organisations worth an estimated £700,000.

The success of the Clinic has led to the University investing over £800,000 to move it into dedicated premises on New Bridge Street earlier this year. The new building boasts client briefing rooms, a boardroom and conferencing and event spaces.

Business Clinic Director, Nigel Coates, said: “Our students have assisted a range of organisations with consultancy advice over the last four years and it has been a pleasure to work with such a passionate client and to be championing organic farming. Our client organisations include local and national, from the smallest to the largest, from the newest to some of the longest established companies in the UK. “We’re hoping to help many more in the years to come and would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in working with us.”

Leading car retailer in driving seat with Northumbria degree apprenticeships

Vertu Motors has embraced degree apprenticeships by offering talented future managers from across the country the chance to gain a BA in Business Leadership and Management Practice with Northumbria.

Degree and higher apprenticeships are a key strand in the Government’s skills strategy, and are open to new recruits and existing staff. All businesses have access to degree apprenticeships, but larger organisations with an annual payroll of more than £3 million are required to pay an annual levy. This has been set at 0.5% of the payroll.

Vertu Motors is the sixth largest motor retailer in the UK, and the first in its sector to offer a degree apprenticeships programme. Robert Forrester, Chief Executive of Vertu Motors plc, has described the decision as “an amazing opportunity for those enthusiastic about forging a career in the motor industry.”

Sandie Dixon, Head of Recruitment and Talent at Vertu Motors plc, looks forward to welcoming new colleagues to the Vertu Motors team: “We are delighted to be partnering with Northumbria University and its respected Newcastle Business School. This landmark apprenticeship programme offers a fantastic opportunity for enthusiastic future managers to gain a respected degree debt-free and to forge a career with one of the most successful businesses in the UK.

“We are proud to be offering this innovative programme and are looking forward to working with the talented colleagues joining us, who demonstrate the commitment, drive and ambition we look for in managers of the future.”

Professor John Wilson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business and Law) at Northumbria, said: “We were one of the first universities to offer degree apprenticeships, investing up to £240,000 to develop our programme. The approach involves collaboration with partners to offer the best possible learning experience for employees and strong outcomes for businesses.

“Vertu is clearly leading the way in its sector and we are excited to be working in partnership with them. I would encourage others to follow their example by investing in degree apprenticeships and embrace what is a significant cultural change in people training and development.”

Northumbria also has open degree apprenticeship programmes with a wide range of employers including H.M. Revenue & Customs, Turner and Townsend, Capita, Esh Group, Durham County Council and many more. The University offers programmes in Chartered Surveying, Chartered Manager, and Digital and Technology Solutions, with more new programmes due to start in 2018. For more information on how your business could benefit from degree apprenticeships with Northumbria University and future events please contact: Sue Graham at degree.apprenticeships@northumbria.ac.uk or call 0191 227 3188.

L-R: Vertu degree apprenticeship student Dan Breen with Sandie Dixon, Head of Recruitment and Talent at Vertu and Professor John Wilson, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Business and Law at Northumbria
Graduates from Northumbria help law firms expand

Two recently launched North East law firms have turned to a graduate internship scheme provided by Northumbria to help drive their growth plans.

Newcastle-based law firm Particular Legal, and Corbridge property law advisors Toomey Legal, were both set up in the past few years. As they look to build on early success with further expansion, they have received funding and assistance from the Northumbria Enterprise Business Support service (NEBS) to recruit new employees.

Sue Shaw-Toomey, who founded Toomey Legal in 2015, has just appointed Northumbria Law School graduate Jennifer Wilkes as the firm’s first employee. Jennifer, who graduated in 2017, will be studying for her conveying qualifications during her six-month internship.

Sue said: “Employing my first member of staff is really exciting but also slightly daunting. However, the graduate internship funding provided by Northumbria is beneficial for a small employer like me. Jennifer is a confident and very capable new graduate and I am delighted to have her working with me. She is aware that in addition to her law knowledge she will be helping on various other activities such as marketing. This is one of the benefits of employing graduates – they have a great set of skills.”

Matthew Rippon, owner and Director of Particular Legal, has appointed Amy Gatenby. Amy graduated in law from Northumbria in 2017 and has already completed a year-long student placement with Particular Legal.

Matthew explained: “During her placement with us I saw Amy’s talent for law and how she fitted in effortlessly with colleagues. I wanted to know how I could appoint her following completion of her Master in Law degree. Without funding from the graduate internship scheme, I may only have been able to offer a paralegal opportunity rather than a trainee solicitor position. As a business, we have strong links with Northumbria, and recruiting our former placement student was an obvious choice for us.”

Victor Ottaway, Graduate Internship Manager at Northumbria said: “Particular Legal and Toomey Legal are two excellent examples of companies seeking to employ law graduates. Having spent a little time getting to know both Jennifer and Amy I’m very impressed with both graduates and I know Sue and Matthew are both looking to support the long-term success of their businesses.”

Prestigious research funding brings top law academic to Northumbria

Northumbria Law School has secured its first Leverhulme award funding a visiting professor to lecture and collaborate on research at the University.

Professor Warren Brookbanks, from Auckland University of Technology, is a globally-recognised authority in criminal law, mental health law, criminal justice and non-adversarial justice. He is co-author of New Zealand’s leading criminal law publication Principles of Criminal Law – a highly influential text book referred to by legal academics and practitioners around the world. The Leverhulme Trust is a major charitable funder that supports a range of research projects. Funding from the Trust is highly sought after within the UK higher education sector, and carries considerable prestige. Receiving the award is a measure of Northumbria Law School’s growing reputation, and in particular the strength of research undertaken by its internationally-leading Northumbria University Centre for Evidence and Criminal Justice research centre.

The Leverhulme award will fund collaborative research between Professor Brookbanks and academics from Northumbria Law School. During his stay at Northumbria, Professor Brookbanks will also give a series of high-profile public lectures. These will tackle areas such as concerns around mental wellbeing in the legal profession, international developments in fitness to plead, and cases of negligence in medical manslaughter. Professor Brookbanks will also deliver a lecture for undergraduates on the ‘sexsomnia defence’ – exploring the law around sexual behaviour in sleep. Students will then have an opportunity to take part in a question and answer session with him.

Professor Brookbanks said: “It is a great privilege to be the recipient of a Leverhulme Visiting Professorship. I am indebted to the staff at Northumbria Law School, in particular Associate Professor Nicola Wake, for making this possible. I am looking forward to engaging with people through the public lecture series and meeting with Northumbria law students, in addition to working in collaboration with academic researchers at Northumbria Law School. Associate Professor Doctor Nicola Wake, who led the Leverhulme bid and will be working closely with Professor Brookbanks, said: “To have such an influential and well-respected visiting professor lecturing, and collaborating on research and publications at Northumbria is hugely exciting for our academics and a wonderful learning opportunity for our students. His writings on areas like fitness to plead have informed law making and are what academics and practitioners refer to when they need guidance. Attracting our first Leverhulme funding for a visiting professor is also extremely prestigious. It confirms just how significant the research we are undertaking here is regarded – both in the UK and internationally. Along with my colleagues I am looking forward immensely to working with Professor Brookbanks and to the insight he will bring to our subject.”

Professor Brookbanks will be based at Northumbria Law School between January and April 2018. His first lecture on 10 January 2018 will be entitled ‘International Developments in Fitness to Plead’.
Celebrated figures awarded honorary degrees

Four eminent figures from the fields of law, medicine, business and influential writing were awarded honorary degrees this summer.

A ward-winning journalist, author, broadcaster, campaigner, feminist and playwright, Beatrix Campbell OBE received the degree of Doctor of Letters for her lifelong and outstanding service to equal opportunities.

An active and influential campaigner since her teenage years, Beatrix’s far-reaching career spans almost five decades with highlights including working as a reporter and columnist for the Morning Star, Time Out and Marxism Today; co-founding the influential Marxist and feminist journal, Red Rag; and standing as a Green Party parliamentary candidate.

As an author and social commentator, her work has gained several awards, including the Cheltenham Literature Festival Prize, the Fawcett Society Prize and the First Time Producers Award.

One of the world’s leading health experts, Professor Kevin Fenton, was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science for his positive impact on the lives of millions of people.

Professor Fenton is a medical doctor, academic and public health specialist who has played a pivotal role in shaping public health in the UK, Europe and the USA. He has led work in HIV, AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Hepatitis C. His transformation of the policy surrounding HIV screening reduced the number of undiagnosed cases in the USA and led to changes in World Health Organisation policy.

Today, Professor Fenton is the National Director for Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England, where he is responsible for national health programmes. These include screening for cancer and chronic conditions, tackling health inequalities, and prevention programmes including tobacco control, alcohol harm reduction, and NHS Health Checks.

Doctorates of Civil Law were awarded to The Rt Hon Lord Mackay of Clashfern and Adam Serfontein.

Lord Mackay, one of the UK’s most respected and influential legal figures, received his award for his contribution to the UK judicial system. During the 1960s and 70s, Lord Mackay ascended the ranks of the Scottish Bar to become Lord Advocate, the Chief Legal Officer of the Government and Crown in Scotland. He later became Lord of Appeal in Ordinary of the House of Lords, the UK’s highest court of appeal, before becoming the longest serving Lord Chancellor of the 20th century.

Lord Mackay continues to be active in the House of Lords, frequently participating in debates. He has received many honours, including Knight of the Thistle; Lord Clerk Register of Scotland and ex officio Keeper of the Signet, the seal of the sovereign in Scotland.

Investment expert Adam Serfontein was recognised for his vast contribution to the region’s economy.

Adam is Managing Director of property investment company, Hanno Group, and Chair of NE1, Newcastle’s international award-winning business improvement company, which instigated Alive after Five, an evening economy worth an estimated £700 million. His work has secured investments of £30 million for the redevelopment of Central Station and the Bigg Market.

Alongside his role of Deputy Chair of Northumbria University’s Board of Governors, Adam is a member of the advisory board for InvestNewcastle, which helps businesses to locate, expand and flourish in the city; and chairs Developing Consensus, an alliance of private- and public-sector organisations, that has invested £1 billion in the regional economy over the last ten years.

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Academics from Northumbria University and Durham University hosted the Impact of Hazard, Risk and Disasters on Societies conference, with the former leader of the United Nations strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström among its keynote speakers. Both institutions are recognised as leaders in this field. In 2004 Northumbria launched the Disaster and Development Network (DDN), alongside it’s MSc in Disaster Management and Sustainable Development, which began in 2000. This pioneering degree programme was the first of its kind anywhere in the world. In 2007 Durham University established its Institute of Hazard, Risk and marked the 10th anniversary by teaming up with Northumbria to organise the Impact of Hazard, Risk and Disasters on Societies conference. Professor Andrew Collins is conference co-chair and leader of the DDN at Northumbria. He said: “This was the 11th in our annual series of global Dealing with Disasters conferences, which has been staged at different institutions around the world including Sierra Leone, South Africa, Nepal and UK. “This year, we were very honoured to have Durham University’s Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience host the series to recognise our common interests and the North East’s status as a world leader in this field. Northumbria’s DDN also co-chairs for the recently formed UK Alliance for Disaster Research (UKADR), which was also linked to this event, and the Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes (GADRI) that will link with a future DDN event in Newcastle. “We had a number of prestigious speakers and delegates from around the world attending. Our own student Disaster and Development Society (DDS) also played a prominent role and have been as proactive as always in getting involved. “Northumbria was one of the first institutions in the world to drive disaster and development approaches that are now a recognised and growing field in Higher Education. It is appropriate that over the next few years we plan to bring this international conference back to Northumbria.” Keynote speakers included Dr Ciro Orgate, Director of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief at the Pan American Health Organization, and Professor Elco Dykstra, the Institute of Civil Engineers’ 11th Brunel International Lecturer 2016-18. The Impact of Hazard, Risk and Disasters on Societies conference brought together practitioners, researchers, humanitarian agencies and hazard managers, with discussions focusing on the latest findings and challenges around managing hazards and surviving disasters. Themes included the security of natural resources such as water, understanding and managing geohazards, the displacement of refugees, the impacts of hazards on culture and heritage, vulnerabilities and health-centred disaster risk reduction.

Secrets of the Sahara unearthed

A new research by Northumbria academics has provided a new insight into exactly when the Sahara began to transform into a desert we know today. Research using carbon dating and chemical analysis has shown that significant changes in dust levels took place in Romania around 6,000 years ago, despite the climate in Eastern Europe being relatively wet at this time. This suggests the dust came from outside the region, most likely from the Sahara, indicating it had begun to transform into a desert at this time. The research was led by Jack Longman, a Geography PhD student at Northumbria, and his findings were recently published in the journal Climate of the Past.

Jack said: “We know that as recently as 6,000 years ago, what is now the vast, dusty and uninhabited Sahara desert was covered in lush grassland. However, the end of this period has been subject to much discussion, both with regards to its timing and its impact on the environment. To investigate, we analysed the elemental makeup of a peat bog in Romania. Such bogs form slowly over thousands of years, with each new layer being deposited on top of the previous, trapping the chemical, and organic signature of that precise time period within it. Using carbon dating, the age of the bog was determined, allowing us to look back at the conditions which occurred at the time each layer formed. A core of almost 10 metres of peat sediment was recovered, representing nearly 11,000 years of deposition. Jack and his team analysed peat from different periods in time, looking specifically for higher levels of titanium, potassium and silicon – all chemical elements associated with higher levels of dust within the peat. In addition, they also counted the number of single-celled organisms called testate amoebae, whose population changes depending on the amount of water in the bog, giving an indication of how wet or dry the climate was during different periods. Combining this information allowed the team to determine when dust from the Sahara began to land in Romania. As Jack explains: "Between 10,800 and 6,100 years ago, the number of testate amoeba present appears to be in sync with the amount of dust recorded, indicating that the dust is likely to be related to local droughts and soil erosion. However, for the past 6,100 years the number of testate amoeba present show the bog was constantly wet, despite numerous large dust deposits during this time. We also saw that over the last 6,100 years the dust has contained higher levels of titanium, which suggests a major shift from a local source to one which appears Saharan in origin. The amount of dust recorded in the bog also shifts around this time, with much more deposited in the last 6,100 years than previously."
Physicists of the future celebrated

Young scientists from across Tyne and Wear were recognised during the regional heat of the national Schools Physicist of the Year awards, held in the North East for the first time this year and hosted by Northumbria.

The event saw 38 students from 19 local schools receive awards for their efforts in Physics. The winners had all been nominated by their teachers and either shown real enthusiasm for physics, overcome obstacles to succeed, achieved high marks or shown improvement.

Dr Antonio Portas is a member of Northumbria’s NUSTEM project, which aims to encourage and inspire the next generation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics students through a wide variety of educational events.

Dr Portas said: "We were very pleased to host the North East’s first Schools Physicist of the Year awards here at Northumbria – it was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate some of the region’s most promising physics students and their dedicated teachers, along with their proud parents."

"We were especially proud to see so many female physicists amongst the nominees. It was also a great chance for the team here at Northumbria to give the students a real flavour of what it means to study physics at degree level."

"Our NUSTEM team already work closely with local schools and hope events such as this will inspire more young people in the North East to consider science as a career and encourage the next generation of employees to acquire STEM-skills, highly in demand by businesses."

More than 130 people attended the event, with Professor Glen McNahle, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engineering & Environment), welcoming guests. This was followed by a lecture on soft matter by Dr Rodrigo Ledesma Aguilar.

Across the UK 25 Schools Physicist of the Year events have taken place, with more than 600 students recognised for their achievements and efforts in physics, including many Year 6 primary students who will receive Primary Scientist of the Year Awards.

To find out more about Northumbria’s Department of Mathematics, Physics and Electrical Engineering and the degree courses available come along to our next Open Day. Northumbria is a recognised leader in STEM education and opened its new £6.7m science facilities earlier this year.

The Schools Physicist of the Year awards are funded by the Ogden Trust – a charitable trust that promotes the teaching and learning of physics.

A flare for science

Our understanding of the spectacular space phenomenon known as solar flares has taken a step forward thanks to a Northumbria PhD student.

A team of international astronomers, led by Northumbria researcher Malcolm Druett, has moved closer to unravelling a 30-year-old mystery in the formation of solar flares. Malcolm presented the team’s findings at the National Astronomy Meeting in Hull in the summer to coincide with the publication of their research in prestigious journal, Nature Communications.

Solar flares are large explosions on the surface of the Sun, associated with the eruption of large amounts of matter. These coronal mass ejections can cause adverse ‘space weather’, disrupting communications and even electrical power supplies. Scientists use a variety of techniques to study the Sun, including looking at the so-called ‘H-alpha line’ in the solar spectrum, associated with the hydrogen gas that makes up the atmospheres of all the planets, including the Earth.

"A greater understanding of how a solar flare can occur and how much energy they eject into the Sun and heliosphere is a major priority for the space industry and space weather forecasters. Our paper sheds significant light on the main factors, which are able to account for the observations associated with these phenomena both in the Sun and in the heliosphere," the team now hope that the research will advance the whole field of solar flare dynamics, allowing a better understanding of the process of flare formation and disruptive space weather.

Alongside Northumbria’s team, a number of other international academics collaborated on this discovery. Northumbria is a specialist in the multidisciplinary research theme Extreme Environments. Academics working in this area lead research in the most extreme conditions, both on Earth and in space.

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Woon winner reveals new work at Northumbria

The winner of the 2016-17 Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture prize has exhibited her latest artwork at Northumbria.

Rebecca Halliwell-Sutton

Rebecca Halliwell-Sutton was awarded the prestigious art prize, worth £20,000, last year, making her the fourth recipient of the fellowship.

Her recent exhibition, entitled Field Studies of Touch, is the result of her year-long residency at Northumbria in the Woon Tai Jee Studio at the BALTIC 39 contemporary art hub in Newcastle.

Rebecca’s work explores the associations between land and body, using the visual languages of archaeology and geology. The collected works included within the exhibition contemplate ideas of naturalness, truth and history, considering the slippage between inherited knowledge, predictions and interpretations.

Speaking about her work over the last year, Rebecca said: “The Woon fellowship has been invaluable for my art practice. It has enabled my work to really develop, allowing me to create four new collections of works exploring different strands and areas of interest.”

“Over the last year I have taken part in exhibitions across the country, including two solo shows, four group shows, an open studio and a group studio exhibition with the previous Woon fellows.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do any of this without the time, money, studio and workshop access that the Woon Fellowship has afforded me. I’ve also really enjoyed conversations with staff and mentors from BxNU.

“I’m excited to celebrate the end of the fellowship by showing new exploratory work. This exhibition marks new developments in my practice rather than a show that could be a reflective timeline of the year’s work.”

The Woon Foundation Painting and Sculpture Prize offers an exceptional opportunity for final year undergraduate art students in the UK, with The Woon Foundation funding three major prizes and discretionary commendation prizes each year to the value of £40,000.

Mr Wee Teng Woon, a Northumbria graduate and keen art collector, along with his three brothers, established the Woon Foundation by showing new works at Northumbria. The competition was launched in 2012 and has since attracted some of the UK’s most exciting artists.

The annual award is jointly coordinated and presented by the BxNU Institute for Contemporary Art at BALTIC 39 – the result of a collaborative partnership between BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Northumbria University.

Dr Heather Robson, Head of the department of Arts at Northumbria, said: “Throughout her Fellowship Rebecca has really made the most of the opportunities and the connections the BxNU partnership and the Woon Fellowship has presented. She has immersed herself in the cultural scene here in the North East, as well as contributing to artistic programmes nationally, building up fantastic connections.”

Holly Hendry was the first Woon Fellow (2013-14), followed by Ramona Zoladek (2014-15), Kayt Hughes (2015-16) and Rebecca Halliwell-Sutton in 2016-17. Earlier this year Joy Labinjo was awarded the fifth Fellowship.

Historic art in safe hands

New technology, which could be used to save valuable and historic works of art while helping experts identify fakes, is being tested at Northumbria.

As a leading researcher in the field of art conservation, Dr Theodorakopoulos is now using the equipment in a number of important projects within the North East. Developed by Portuguese company SpectralTEK, the equipment is already attracting interest from well-known museums and galleries. Earlier this year Dr Theodorakopoulos organised a workshop at Northumbria focusing on the potential of multispectral cameras in art conservation. It was attended by representatives from the British Museum, National Galleries of Scotland, Tyne & Wear Archives Museum and the Bowes Museum, as well as a number of UK universities and major art conservation companies.

Dr Theodorakopoulos said: “The work I have carried out, and links I have built within the field of conservation, meant I was asked to be involved in this project. I was very pleased to be asked to test the XpeCAM X01 camera, which uses the very latest technology available within the field, and to have it here at Northumbria is a fantastic opportunity. It is already being used in a number of exciting projects – unfortunately I can’t say too much at this stage but I am sure there will be some great results to share over the coming months.”

Dr Vassilis Papadakis, Co-Founder of SpectralTEK, said: “We are grateful for having collaborated with Dr Charis Theodorakopoulos. The workshop attracted significant scientists from across the UK and brought new collaborations regarding spectral imaging. We are looking forward to furthering our collaborations with the conservation team in Northumbria. We have to look beyond our human limitations and start studying the unseen.”

Northumbria was ranked in the top 101-150 out of almost 1,700 universities from across the globe for Art and Design in the 2017 QS World University Rankings by Subject, meaning it is in the top 8% institutions in the world for Art and Design Higher Education.
Historic discoveries by Northumbria academic lead to city-wide cultural event

It’s not every day you get to make history, especially for those who usually teach the subject.

However, Northumbria’s Professor Brian Ward has done exactly that after his research into Martin Luther King’s ‘lost’ visit to Newcastle helped inspire this year’s Freedom City celebrations.

Brian’s discoveries, including footage of Dr King’s speech and a handkerchief he gave in thanks, have led to Freedom City 2017, a city-wide arts and cultural programme of activity to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr King’s visit to Newcastle to accept an Honorary Doctorate in Civil Law. Brian has written a new book about Dr King’s visit and has co-curated an exhibition of unique, archive material at Newcastle University’s Philip Robinson Library based on his research. Martin Luther King in Newcastle, brings alive the historic significance and contemporary relevance of this episode in North East, British and US history. As well as detailing the events of the day, the book tells the more personal story behind Dr King’s decision to fly across the Atlantic to spend less than eleven hours in a city that he knew little about at a time of enormous professional strain and personal doubt. The book reveals how Brian discovered film of Dr King’s ‘lost’ Newcastle speech and puts the civil rights leader’s inspiring words into the context of 1960s’ British and US race relations, arguing their relevance and importance in 2017. Brian’s book also places Dr King’s visit within another lost history – the link between the African American freedom struggle and the North East.

Launched at Newcastle City Library in September, Martin Luther King in Newcastle has already received international praise from a number of sources. Newcastle Central MP Chi Onwurah said: “Brian Ward’s book helps to recover the history of racial, ethnic and religious diversity on Tyneside, along with the region’s many international connections. This important book is as timely as it is compelling.”

John A. Kirk, Professor of History at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, said: “Brian Ward makes Martin Luther King Jr’s visit to Newcastle in 1967 the starting point for an impressively authoritative and breathtakingly sweeping examination of the city’s and region’s engagement with global struggles for freedom and equality over several centuries. Packed with expert analysis, insightful examples and surprising connections, Ward compellingly argues that past racial and ethnic relations profoundly inform the present and still remain tellingly relevant today.”

Shaka Hislop, former Newcastle United goalkeeper and supporter of Show Racism the Red Card called it: “A fascinating book about a forgotten slice of Newcastle and American history that has much to tell us about race relations in the 21st century. The continuing importance of the message Martin Luther King brought to Newcastle in 1967 shines through on every page.”

Brian, Professor in American Studies at Northumbria, said: “The book explains the significance of King’s visit both in terms of British and US society in the 1960s and in terms of historic links between the North East and the African American freedom struggle. Given that King was not even supposed to speak, it’s wonderful that we can now be inspired by the call he made in Newcastle to confront the global problems of racism, poverty and war. Those words still have tremendous relevance. I am pleased that they are at the heart of the Freedom City 2017 celebrations of King’s visit.”

Freedom City will launch in full during November to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Dr King’s visit to Newcastle. One of the first events has been a special exhibition of unique archival materials, including a handkerchief that Dr King presented to staff at Newcastle University as a gift. This was originally given to Mrs Edna Kane, who managed the official residence of the Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University alongside her husband Laurence as a thank you for the hospitality he received during his stay. Brian located the handkerchief from Mr and Mrs Kane’s son Peter, along with Dr King’s lost speech, while researching his new book.

Northumbria has one of the UK’s leading cohorts of American Studies scholars and is also recognised for its world-leading research across the Humanities. Results from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework saw Northumbria ranked in the top quartile of UK universities. Our researchers have attracted major funding from Research Councils UK as well as the British Academy, Leverhulme Trust and Nuffield Foundation.

Geraldine Hunwick, Senior Archivist (Special Collections & Archives) at the Philip Robinson Library with Martin Luther King’s handkerchief
Creative sector is lighting the fuse

New research carried out by the North East’s five universities into the impact of the region’s creative, digital and IT (CDIT) sector has revealed it is growing faster than elsewhere in the UK.

To understand the challenges and opportunities unique to the North East’s CDIT sector, Creative Fuse North East, a partnership between Northumbria, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland and Teesside universities, conducted a comprehensive survey of more than 500 firms and freelancers. Business executives from across the CDIT sector were also interviewed to understand the different issues facing organisations and individuals today. The findings show that more than half the businesses surveyed grew their turnover in 2015/16. This was especially true in IT, software and computer services, design, crafts and architecture.

The £4m Creative Fuse North East project was set up in spring 2016 to support the CDIT sector in the region to become more resilient, grow faster and create more and better jobs in a sustainable digital economy. It is funded jointly by the universities involved, alongside the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England (ACE) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Earlier this year, Northumbria appointed three creative researchers as part of its role in the project. Dr Emmanouil Chatzakis, Dr Kate Lampitt Adey and Nate Sterling are currently working with local companies to establish how design skills and technology can be shared and applied to solve a variety of challenges. The project’s first report was launched in London by the Rt Hon Ed Vaizey, Chairman of the Creative Fuse North East Advisory Board and former Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy. It highlights that employment in the region’s creative industries has grown faster than the UK as a whole, with a 22.6% increase from 2001 and 2015, compared to 19.5% nationally.

Mr Vaizey said: “Our research has outlined the opportunities and the challenges facing the CDIT sector in the North East. The creative industries are absolutely vital to the economy and it is very encouraging to see that the sector is growing, with more than half the businesses reporting growth. “Now we have the results, we can enter the innovation phase of the project with the information we need to really target the areas which need support to grow and to innovate.”

Mark Bailey is the academic lead for Creative Fuse at Northumbria. He said: “Following the results of the initial survey, the project will now enter the innovation phase, which will see academics from each of the five universities involved working with industry, cultural organisations, charities and the public sector, to look at new ways to innovate and grow.”

Cyber safety solutions sought

Representatives from the North East’s creative, digital and IT sectors have been working together to find new ways of keeping children and young people safe and healthy online.

More than 50 people attended a recent Cyber-Wellbeing Solution Hack, organised by Northumbria University’s Creative Fuse team. During the 12-hour session attendees split into groups, using their creativity and technical expertise to come up with innovative online safety solutions for teenagers. It is hoped some of the concepts created during the event will be developed into real-world technologies and used by teachers and parents in schools and homes across the country.

The Cyber-Wellbeing Solution Hack was organised in association with Northumbria Police and Campus North and is part of a wider project between Creative Fuse North East and the police around raising public awareness of cyber security.

Detective Chief Superintendent Lisa Orchard, Head of Crime at Northumbria Police, said: “Working with Creative Fuse allows us to access the creativity and expertise of academic and IT professionals to come up with new and innovative solutions to some of our most challenging issues in keeping young people safe online.”

The theme of cybercrime has also been the focus of research by a team of six students from Northumbria’s Multidisciplinary Innovation Masters course who have recently undertaken a three-month project exploring the subject. Focusing specifically on cybercrime and teenagers, they looked at current educational practices and the different habits, behaviours, perceptions and awareness between young people, teachers, and parents.

Northumbria has been assessed as world-leading and internationally excellent for its research in evidence-based policing, with research themes including Cybercrime & IT, Forensic Science & Police Cooperation, Police Organisation & Staff and Policing & Vulnerability. Working in partnership with the police and other agencies in the North East as well as nationally and internationally, the University’s outstanding breadth and depth of expertise in contemporary policing is providing wide-ranging, cutting-edge science and applied research that informs policy and practice.

Northumbria’s Police Research and Education Network is hosting a series of seminars throughout the year, drawing on leading research expertise in each of the University’s faculties. Each session will provide an opportunity for staff to present their research findings on key topics for contemporary policing and to reflect on the challenge of developing evidence based for police practice.
Exploring the future of digital disruption

An innovative event exploring the future challenges and opportunities created by advances in digital technology has been held by Northumbria.

Researchers, industry and the public took part in a Digital Disruption event, which explored how technology is changing the face of business and services, what the future may hold and what opportunities this may present.

With successful digital disrupters such as Uber, Airbnb and Amazon dramatically changing the face of transport, hospitality and retail in recent years, the event considered what future technological advances could take place and how this could benefit business in the North East and across the UK.

Keynote speakers included Kristina Höök, professor in Interaction Design at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden, who led the Mobile Life Research Centre along with partners such as Ericsson, IKEA andABB; and Microsoft Innovation Director Haiyan Zhang, who created a watch which uses vibrations to stem tremors caused by Parkinson’s Disease.

The centre-piece of the day was a panel exploring how academics, industry and the public sector can work together to future-proof their operations. It included insights from universities, business leaders and research councils.

The event was organised by Lars Erik Holmquist, Professor of Innovation at INNOVATE, Northumbria University’s designed innovation centre. He said: “It is impossible to predict the future – but it is safe to assume that digital technologies will continue to disrupt the world. This has been happening the last 50 years, from mainframes to PCs to the internet to mobile, and it will most definitely continue – we just don’t know exactly how.”

Although we can’t predict the future, we can still prepare for it. One way of doing this is to use scientific methods to create future scenarios and test them in the real world. Being aware of potential future events takes away uncertainty and helps organisations and businesses to be prepared for the future.

“This work is all about risk mitigation and future proofing – digital technology presents so many opportunities but while some businesses will benefit there will inevitably be those that are left behind. Our research aims to help businesses see digital disruption as a positive force and spot opportunities for future growth as a result.”

Over the last 12 years, Northumbria has developed significant expertise in the field of Visible Light Communications through the work of its Optical Communications Research Group, led by Professor Fary Ghassemlooy. As a result, Northumbria is the only UK institution involved in the €3.44m Visible Light Communications based Interoperability and Networking (VISION) project.

As a key partner in VISION, Northumbria has been awarded over £440,000 to help train a new generation of early-stage researchers in the emerging area of Visible Light Communication. Academics at the University will also work to achieve better scientific understanding and technical knowledge within this field.

The project will explore how the technology can be used in smart transportation, and medical and manufacturing environments. As part of Northumbria’s role in VISION, academics will support PhD students, run tutorials and workshops and write academic papers.

Professor Ghassemlooy said: “Visible Light Communication (also known as LiFi) is completely transforming the concept of telecommunication. Modern LED lights are extremely energy efficient and long lasting and it is predicted that in the near future LEDs will be the main source of light worldwide. The benefit of LEDs is that they are semiconductor devices, similar to silicon chips, which means we can switch these bulbs on and off at very high speeds. This allows data to be sent from LED lights to devices such as computers, smart phones, traffic signs and a wide variety of other receivers. This is a very exciting area of research that could have high-impact results and Northumbria is very proud to be part of this ground-breaking project.”

VisIoN is supported by academic and industry partners from seven European countries including Spain, France, Germany and Czech Republic and will run for four years. The project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 764461.

Northumbria’s Optical Communications Research Group has been established for 12 years and carries out pioneering work on visible light communications and organic visible light communications, in collaboration with Siemens, University College London and others. Northumbria’s Agilent-sponsored Photonic Research Laboratory is the first of its kind in the North of England with unique and state-of-the-art test and measurement facilities.

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On the verge of greatness

Creative students working in the space connecting art and education have been exhibiting in Newcastle.

The VERGE exhibition took place at BALTIC 39 on High Bridge Street to celebrate the success of Northumbria’s MA Fine Art / Contemporary Arts and Education students. It features work by final year students Colette Davies, Helen Fox, Martyn Jones, William Pym and Karen Sikora, as well as work by MA Contemporary Arts and Education first year students Peter Corkish, Ali Holden, Daniel Hughes, Michaela Noble, and Leo Underwood.

Dr Judy Thomas, Programme Leader MA Fine Art / Contemporary Arts and Education, explains how the exhibition marked the progress of the students across the academic year as they develop as artists, teachers and educators. She said: “The students have worked hard challenging their preconceived ideas surrounding individual practice; this has resulted in a diverse and exciting exhibition, demonstrating a diversity of creative activity and innovative development achieved through a sense of critical enquiry and material investigation. “The course has enabled them to collaborate and experiment allowing them to take risks, challenge previous presumptions of tradition, medium and practice. They have achieved this by inviting audience interaction, utilising the potential of photography, film, performance and installation as tools of communication.”

“This indicates a broadening awareness and consideration to how their work is received within a social context. This also reflects their roles as Artist Educators and the generosity with which they share their enthusiasm and knowledge within their learning environments. It has also resulted in a highly professional and thought provoking show.”

The MA Contemporary Arts and Education course is a unique collaboration between BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and Northumbria. This distinctive postgraduate experience, delivered in partnership, supports teachers and educators to establish or enhance their combined practices as artist and facilitator at masters’ level. Students make and talk about art through a dynamic, student-led process framed within the context of contemporary art alongside learning and teaching enquiry. The crucial relationship between a personal creative practice and the methods of teaching art are extended through artist-led projects and gallery learning, as well as the more individual traditions of a studio practice.

Northumbria new blood pencils in a future career

Animation graduate Emilie Hoggarth has picked up a prestigious ‘pencil’ award at this year’s D&AD New Blood exhibition in London.

Emilie, who graduated with an Animation BA (Hons) from Northumbria in the summer, received the award after designing a campaign for international online film streaming company MUBI as her final year project. Each year design briefs are set by a variety of global brands ahead of the D&AD New Blood event, with current students, recent graduates and under 24s from around the world invited to submit their work. The winners are then announced at the exhibition, which aims to stimulate, enable and award creative excellence in design and advertising. Emilie’s campaign, entitled Get Some Perspective, compared the way issues such as immigration, feminism and race were portrayed in the media with their portrayal through film.

She said: “One of the things I love about film is the way it allows you to explore other people’s worlds and experiences though relatable characters. It can be an incredible way to foster understanding and create empathy.”

“In contrast to this, the media and news outlets can often have a negative or one-sided standpoint and often rely on the use of numbers and statistics, which can have a dehumanising affect. For my campaign I wanted to show how film allows you to explore issues such as the Syrian refugee crisis or the Black Lives Matter movement by contrasting their portrayal in the mainstream media with their portrayal in film.”

Emilie created several trailers, showing newsreel clips alongside clips from films portraying the same events – for example, news coverage of the recent refugee crisis followed by clips from films which tell the stories of those affected. Her campaign won a coveted ‘pencil award’, recognising the best in advertising and design work each year, with winning entries also included in the D&AD Annual. Emilie, who is originally from Middlesbrough, added: “Taking part in the D&AD New Blood exhibition with Northumbria University was a fantastic opportunity – I met lots of industry contacts and managed to set up some internships in London which I hope will lead onto a job in the future. “Winning a pencil award was a great end to what has been a fantastic three years of study at Northumbria. The Animation course allowed me to be creative and there was a fantastic sense of community, as well as great support from lecturers and other students.”
Design takes centre stage at Gibside

Architecture students celebrate award success

The innovative work of two Northumbria Architecture students has been recognised at the annual RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) North East Student Awards.

A contemporary new structure, based on a design by Northumbria student Allard Newell, has been built in the walled garden of the Derwent Valley property, which was once owned by the Bowers-Lyon family. Created in collaboration with design studio Jardine Couture, The Pavilion will be used to house temporary displays, as well as offering seating and framed views of the garden. Its installation marks the culmination of a two-year project involving 18 students from Northumbria’s BA (Hons) Interior Architecture course. Allard’s winning design took inspiration from the estate’s landscape, and will be enjoyed by thousands of people visiting the popular North East attraction.

Allard’s Pavilion will be enjoyed by thousands of people visiting the popular North East attraction. Allard said: “The experience I have gained through working alongside the National Trust and the appointed design consultancy has been an unbelievable opportunity. Not only has it helped with my studies, it has allowed me to gain experience of working on a live project and seeing the design process through from concept, to delivery.”

Peter Dixon, Senior Lecturer in Northumbria’s Department of Architecture and the Built Environment, said: “Working on a live project of this kind is of huge benefit to the students. We’re sure the Pavilion will prove a popular addition to Gibside and hope that our partnership with the National Trust continues so future students can also benefit from experiences and projects such as this.”

The Pavilion is part of Gibside Walled Garden: Redesign Renew Revive, a two-year National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund initiative that aims to encourage new ways of seeing and learning about the history of the Gibside estate.

Deborah Hunter-Knight, Walled Garden Project Officer at Gibside, said: “Allard’s Pavilion design is a superb addition to the walled garden, taking inspiration from the tree-lined avenue that connects Gibside’s chapel to the Liberty Column. This project has offered a unique experience for the students to design a structure, one of which was selected, and has now been built. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved and I’m extremely proud to have been a part of it.”

Matthew Glover, MA (Arch) graduate, was awarded the Hadrian Medal – his time at Northumbria University has given me the freedom to experiment and be creative with the way I approached architecture and design, which has been of huge benefit.”

Masters graduate Matthew Glover’s project, entitled PRIMEART, focused on the regeneration of the former Odeon Building in the East Pilgrim Street Development Area of Newcastle. Matthew said: “I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Northumbria University and being part of the large community within the architecture department. Through both my undergraduate and Masters courses there has always been great support from tutors and other students. Being recognised at the RIBA Student Awards was a very proud moment for me.”

The RIBA North East Student Awards are delivered each year to celebrate the talent of architecture students in the region. Chair of the awards jury, Paul Yeomans, said: “We loved the design process Bor-Ren Hui and Matthew Glover went through in his early analysis. This created a well-resolved building which the judges thought would be a delight to explore. Meanwhile Matthew Glover’s project successfully investigated social and economic issues to create the PRIMEART building and the level of resolution in the final scheme was very good, particularly the physical models.”

Northumbria’s Architecture degree is among the best in the UK. The University has recently announced ambitious plans for a new purpose-built Architecture Studios in an extension to the historic Sutherland Building, providing a world-class home for Northumbria’s world-leading Architecture staff and students.

L-R: Deborah Hunter-Knight (National Trust project manager), Ben Couture (Jardine Couture), Peter Dixon (Northumbria University) and Allard Newell (student)
The car, named the Green Bolide, runs on pure bioethanol – a fuel made renewable from agricultural crops or recycled waste which produces far fewer emissions and greenhouse gases than traditional petrol or diesel. Once complete the vehicle will be entered into the international Shell Eco-Marathon, in which students from across the world compete to build a vehicle that can travel the furthest distance using the least amount of energy. Teams can use a variety of fuels to power their cars, including diesel, gasoline, bioethanol, CNG, hydrogen, GTL and electric battery.

The team, made up of 11 Northumbria students, is known as NUCLEUS (Northumbria University Clean Energy Ultimate Solution) and has been supervised by Dr Ulugbek Azimov, programme leader for Automotive Engineering at Northumbria. He said: “As part of our Automotive Engineering course at Northumbria we research how cars can be made cleaner and greener and so the Shell Eco-Marathon design challenge seemed the perfect way to incorporate this further into our programme. The project has allowed students to apply what they are learning in the classroom to a real life situation. The experience they have gained has been invaluable – we’re now looking forward to seeing how the car performs at the Shell Eco-Marathon next year.”

Team NUCLEUS has had to overcome a number of challenges during the project. As well as focusing on the aerodynamics of the car, the students have also had to investigate the effect of pure bioethanol fuel on the vehicle’s performance and its emission levels. Bioethanol has a much lower energy density than gasoline, meaning roughly four times as much is required to travel the same distance. They have adapted a small gasoline engine using a cutting-edge electronic fuel injection system and reduced the car’s weight to just 60kg by using lighter materials and removing unnecessary components – all with the aim of increasing fuel efficiency.

The team has had support from a number of organisations, including the Shell Eco-Marathon organisers, who awarded NUCLEUS a £5,000 grant, and a number of local engineering and automotive businesses. The members have documented their progress throughout the project via a range of media resources, including a website (www.nucleusnorthumbria.co.uk), Vlog (NUCLEUS GreenBolide on YouTube), Facebook page (Team Nucleus Northumbria) and Instagram account (teamnucleusb).

Students and staff in Computer and Information Sciences will return to a new £7m building in 2018.

The new computer and information sciences building due for completion in 2018
How academia can encourage responsible business

International business leaders and educators have gathered at Northumbria University to discuss what responsible companies expect from graduates entering the workplace.

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative is an association between the United Nations and the world’s business schools to support the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals call for economic growth, innovation, affordable energy and upgraded infrastructure, and are intended to provide a path to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and protect the planet to transform our world for the better. Attendees from 35 universities across the UK, Ireland, Canada, Malaysia and South Africa visited the University to attend PRME’s annual general meeting. With sessions from global business leaders, the academics were able to hear more about how they could support and embed the UN Goals.

The event was organised by Dr Alex Hope, senior lecturer in Business Ethics at the University’s Newcastle Business School, together with Business in the Community. He explained: “As a leading UK university with a global reach, Northumbria has a responsibility to engage and inform our partners on the opportunities the UN Global Goals initiative presents.

“The Goals represent societal challenges which need solutions. In the rush to transform business models and systems for the future, integrity and values will have a huge role to play, so finding these solutions to our societal problems is good business!”

Northumbria signs up to Covenant

Northumbria has become the first university in the North-East to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

As a signatory, Northumbria has committed to recognising the value that serving members of the armed forces contribute to the University and the local community. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. It was enshrined in law in 2011, setting in stone the moral obligation owed to the armed forces by the nation. The government is also committed to supporting the armed forces community by working with a range of partners who have signed the covenant, including businesses, local authorities, charities and the public.

Northumbria has also received a Bronze Award from the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme, in recognition of its support for staff linked to the military, and is commitment to the Covenant.

Lucy Winskell OBE DL, Pro Vice-Chancellor Employability and Partnerships at Northumbria, received the award on behalf of the University at a business event aboard the Royal Naval Reserve unit HMS Calliope on the Tyne. She said: “To be the first university in the North East to sign up to the Covenant is something we are very proud of. It is a clear statement that we recognise the contribution and sacrifice made by members of the Armed Forces community. Today marks the formal signing of our pledge to ensure service personnel, veterans and their families will be supported.”

Jamie Carrarah, Senior Lecturer at Newcastle Business School and Army reservist with 3 Army

Education Centre in Catterick, added: “Maintaining the equilibrium between parallel careers at Northumbria University and the Army Reserve is challenging.

Today marks an important day, which formally recognises Northumbria’s commitment to support staff and students who serve and wider members of the Armed Forces community who have served. My fellow reservists and

Innovation partner Jon Khoo

The meeting’s special guest speaker was Jon Khoo, Innovation Partner at Interface Inc, a worldwide leader in the design, production and sales of environmentally-responsible carpets. He used his speech to outline how academia can play a role in sustainable business development and how students can challenge corporate narratives on today’s sustainable development goals.

“I strongly believe that business has the skills and responsibility to be a force for good,” he said. “By business collaborating with universities and NGOs, it’s proven that none of us is as smart as all of us.” Northumbria University is well known for its outstanding connections with business and industry and is the current number one university in the UK for the number of graduate start-up businesses, based on turnover.

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The Conversation is a collaboration between news editors and academics to provide informed news analysis and commentary that’s free to read and republish.

At Northumbria, our academics have been working with The Conversation to produce independent, quality current affairs journalism on some of the latest topics to hit the news.

Here are some of our top picks…

**Assessing DNA databases: it’s still far from clear how effective they are in fighting crime**

Carole McCartney, Reader of Law at Northumbria University and Aaron Opoku Amankwaa, PhD Researcher in Forensic DNA Database Law, discuss how effective DNA is, and whether the continuing police use and retention of DNA is worthwhile.

**What to do if you fail your GCSEs**

With GCSE results revealed over the summer, Liz Atkins, Associate Professor in Education at Northumbria University, was on hand to offer advice to students who may not have received the results they were after and discussed a variety of options available.

**Assassinating Katie Hopkins may be bad taste but theatre-goers may just love it**

Len Collin, Senior Lecturer in Screenwriting and Media Production, discusses the new musical set to cause controversy in Spring 2018, named ‘The Assassination of Katie Hopkins’. The stage play is guaranteed to divide public opinion but will ultimately encourage a new young audience to go to the theatre.

**Understanding disturbed sleep could help prevent suicides**

Jason Ellis, Professor of Sleep Science at Northumbria University, discusses new research that identifies a relationship between poor sleep and suicidal thoughts in young adults.

**DNA databases: it’s still far from clear how effective they are in fighting crime**

DNA evidence has a profile which it might not deserve. Carole McCartney, Reader of Law at Northumbria University and Aaron Opoku Amankwaa, PhD Researcher in Forensic DNA Database Law, discuss how effective DNA is, and whether the continuing police use and retention of DNA is worthwhile.

**Assessment of disturbed sleep could help prevent suicides**

Jason Ellis, Professor of Sleep Science at Northumbria University, discusses new research that identifies a relationship between poor sleep and suicidal thoughts in young adults.

**Space tourism could help boost science and health research – here’s how**

Spaceports will pave the way for spaceplanes, helping scientists access space for medical research. Nick Caplan, Associate Professor of Musculoskeletal Health, Lecturer in Clinical/Musculoskeletal Biomechanics & Coordinator of the UK Space Environments Association, Andrew Winnard, and Kirsty Lindsay, PhD candidate at Northumbria University, discuss how spaceports will pave the way for spaceplanes, helping scientists access space for medical research.

**The UK’s online porn crackdown could harm young people more than it helps**

The government recently announced plans to force pornographic websites to verify users’ ages by use of technological tools to stop under 18s watching online porn. Whilst it’s argued that viewing pornography is damaging to young people’s moral development, Rosie Hodsdon, PhD candidate in Law and Sexuality at Northumbria University, argues that blocking porn for under-18s will make things worse for young people left without adequate sex education.
Britannia, Jane Austen and the surprising tale of why money has long had a female face

Jane Austen is on the Bank of England’s new £10 note. Claudine Van Hensbergen, Associate Lecturer in Eighteenth-Century English Literature at Northumbria University, discusses why this is long overdue, and how the gendering of finance has evolved over the years.

Too much information? More than 80% of children have an online presence by the age of two

With more and more parents posting images of their children on popular social media sites, Claire Bessant, Associate Professor in Law at Northumbria University, addresses whether this can cause privacy problems and what measures are being taken to prevent oversharing.

For some kids school holidays mean hunger and isolation

Pamela Graham, Vice Chancellor’s Research Fellow at Northumbria University, and Greta Defeyter, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor at Faculty of Health & Life Sciences, write about families’ struggles coping with extra costs of food, activities, and childcare and how holiday clubs can help.

Buggery, bribery and a committee: the story of how gay sex was decriminalised in Britain

Chris Ashford, Professor of Law and Society at Northumbria University, writes about the historical events, and in particular the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, that lead to a shift in attitudes towards gender and sexuality by partially decriminalising male homosexuality.

The ‘French Paradox’ turned out to be an illusion, but it led to some interesting research

Red wine may not explain the French paradox, but Senior lecturer in Biological (specifically nutrition) Psychology at Northumbria University, Emma Wightman, discusses the range of health benefits of chemicals found within it and how it could potentially boost our brain power as we age.

Research shows smacking makes children more aggressive and at risk of mental health problems

Despite it still being legal in the UK, parents smacking their children divides opinions. Although it can be seen as some as the ultimate parenting taboos, many parents still see it as an acceptable form of punishment. Raymond Arthur, Professor of Law at Northumbria University, discusses the long-lasting consequences that smacking may have.

Growing old disgracefully: DC comics’ Harley Quinn turns 25

Andrew Ross, Graduate Tutor and Lecturer in Film at Northumbria University, discusses how Harley Quinn is not just a side-kick to The Joker, but is now a multi-platform anti-hero in her own right.

Why decisions on emoji design should be made more inclusive

The popularity of emoji’s can’t be denied. There has been a film made – the Emoji Movie – in commemoration of the faces, and there is even a dedicated World Emoji Day. However, issues have been raised about how the emoji reflects society’s inherent socio-political biases. Selina Sutton, PhD student at Northumbria University, writes about the complex issues surrounding emoji design in the modern society.
Basketball stars team up with Northumbria to net new careers

More than 75 of Europe’s top basketball players recently spent a week at Northumbria as the first cohort on a leadership and management course as part of an initiative called TIME-OUT.

S
tars including former Newcastle Eagles player Andrew Sullivan and Great Britain captain Kieron Achara have signed-up to the education programme. The initiative follows a partnership between the European office of the Basketball World Governing body (FIBA Europe) and Newcastle Business School to help professional players build careers beyond their playing days. TIME-OUT is the first project of its kind and has secured funding worth £550,000 from the European Erasmus+ Programme. Newcastle Business School was chosen by FIBA because of its international reputation for pioneering learning and academic excellence.

Adopting a ‘dual career’ approach, TIME-OUT aims to provide the skills to transition from elite player to either a top international coach or business manager. The programme includes a mix of distance and block learning spread over two years, with the first cohort already experiencing life as a student by spending a week on campus. They were also able to meet representatives from both Newcastle Eagles, who play at the University, and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), which is also based at Northumbria. Fraser McLeay, Professor of Strategic Marketing Management at Northumbria University, said: “Partnering with FIBA Europe and bringing some of the world’s top basketball stars who have represented their country and played in top leagues like the NBA in the United States is hugely prestigious. Like us they have ambitious plans to develop TIME-OUT well beyond the initial two-year plan and to offer it to as many elite players as possible. “Our record of achievement and pioneering approach to business education, coupled with Northumbria’s status as one of the foremost universities in the UK for sport, makes us an ideal partner. It means we can fulfil the transformational dual-career approach by helping them grow and develop businesses opportunities in sports and other industries, as well as experience life as a business student while they are here.

Kamil Novak, the FIBA Executive Director Europe, added: “Planning a career following retirement as a professional sportsman can be a daunting prospect across most sport. Basketball is no exception and we are delighted to have found the right partner in Newcastle Business School to offer this exciting initiative”. Ann Wauters, a Belgian professional basketball player for Los Angeles Sparks, said: “I am in the autumn of my playing career and am preparing a new chapter of my professional career. It is hard to let go of something you have been doing pretty much your whole life and you are so passionate about. This new project gives me the opportunity to stay involved in sports in a different role and try to make - particularly women’s - basketball more professional.”

Northumbria University has reinforced its reputation as a hotbed for talented female footballers after being named as one of eight Football Association (FA) Women’s High Performance Football Centres in the UK.

T
he new centres will support and drive the FA’s ambition to increase the number of female qualified coaches and improve the quality of coaching; both of which are central to the growth of the women’s game. Through establishing a connection with the England talent pathway and FA Women’s Super League clubs, the eight centres will provide talented players with an environment to support both their academic and football ambitions. They will provide a variety of services such as coaching, sports science and sports medicine and scholarship opportunities.

The FA announcement means that the University’s Coach Lane Campus will become a hub for the development of the women’s game in the North East, helping to provide an educational and community-based setting to recruit, develop and deploy coaches who will lead and inspire player development in the girls’ and women’s game. Being named as a High Performance FA Centre will also facilitate the creation of the next generation of behind-the-scenes staff, whether as volunteers, administrators or development staff.

Northumbria’s Director of Sport, Colin Stromsoy, said the University has a desire to transform women’s football in the region. “I think the FA’s decision is a reflection of the quality of the sport programme at Northumbria and it recognises our determination to invest equally in both men’s and women’s sport,” he said. Barness Sue Campbell, The FA’s Head of Women’s Football, added: “The establishment of these centres is further proof of The FA’s commitment to transform the future of women’s football in England. They will ensure aspiring coaches and talented players in all parts of the country have access to the best training and support possible, providing us with the greatest opportunity for success at all levels of international football.”
Yoga benefits for the elderly revealed

Older people with a range of age-related conditions including arthritis and dementia showed physical and health related improvements after doing yoga classes, according to Northumbria research.

Yoga is an effective way for otherwise physically inactive people aged over 60 years to become more mobile, while also improving their mental and social well-being, according to Dr Garry Tew, from Northumbria’s Department of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation. The three-month research study was conducted at Yorkshire yoga and Therapy Centre, two community centres and a care home in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, with 52 participants ranging from 63 to 92 years of age.

Adapted yoga to improve physical function and health-related quality of life in physically-inactive older adults: A randomised controlled pilot trial’ shows that a weekly group-based yoga programme, adapted for older adults with a broad range of age-related diseases or disorders, can lead to improvements in physical function and mental health.

Adaptations to more challenging yoga poses were developed so that older adults with physical limitations could safely participate while still reaping the health benefits of yoga. The aim of this recent study with Northumbria was to confirm these benefits among a physically-inactive ageing population. The study found the most commonly cited physical benefits included improved mobility, for example improved chair rising, walking ability, improved flexibility and reduced pain. Cited mental health benefits included relief of stress, improved mood and fewer panic attacks. In addition, more than 70% of participants said they liked the social interaction that the group exercise class provided and many said they had developed new friendships.

Dr Tew said: “There can be several barriers to exercise among people aged 60 or more, including personal issues such as pain and discomfort, fear of injury, and misconceptions about what’s appropriate. This yoga programme may be appealing because its content is suitable for people with hip or knee replacements and long-term health conditions such as osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease.

Yoga is a holistic therapy, which has the potential to produce a range of physical and mental benefits. The apparent social benefits of this programme were also very interesting, with many participants saying they felt the classes gave them a new lease of life and made them feel less isolated.”

Barbara Scaife was one of the participants in the research. She recently spent 18 weeks in hospital where she said the yoga helped her. She said: “Yoga deep breathing exercises I had learned in the yoga class helped me to cope with the pain – more than anything else! I love the yoga and I will definitely be coming back to class as soon as I’m able to walk with my sticks again - hopefully soon.”

The research was supported by the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY), which is the National Governing Body for Yoga, recognised by Sport England and the Sport and Recreation Alliance. The BWY has been in existence for 52 years and it is the oldest and largest yoga membership organisation in the UK. BWY Chair, Paul Fox, said: “The British Wheel of Yoga is committed to building on this excellent research. Yoga can play an important role in promoting health, wellness and quality of life among older members of communities across the UK. At a time when an ageing population is putting pressure on health and social care services, yoga can be a cost effective way of meeting this nationwide challenge. Our thanks to Northumbria University and the Yorkshire Yoga and Therapy Centre for their work.”

Charity climb raises £7,500 for community projects

Northumbria Sport staff and students have raised a mountain of cash after completing the arduous Three Peaks Challenge for charity.

The Challenge involves climbing all of the UK’s highest mountains – Snowdon, in Wales; Scafell Pike, in England and Ben Nevis, in Scotland – within just 24 hours. Twenty-two students and staff took part in the Challenge, raising £7,500 on behalf of the Northumbria Sport Foundation to support sports projects for women and children in Newcastle. The Northumbria Sport Foundation is Northumbria Sport’s partner charity and supports a number of worthy causes at home and abroad. Following the success of this latest climbing endeavour, the charity team is focusing on fresh fundraising challenges to run over the next 12 months.

“We are in a great position because we raised well over our target and more than we thought we ever could,” said Northumbria’s Sport Services Assistant (Community and Foundation) Brogan O’Connor.

“Completing the Three Peaks Challenge means we can continue to fund two after-school sport clubs at Bridgewater School, in Newcastle, for children who wouldn’t have access to high quality sport without these sessions. Some of the money raised will also go into supporting and re-establishing the community projects we ran last year – including the Knockout Sister boxing club for Muslim women in Fenham, Newcastle.

“The money should allow us to expand both of these projects. We are looking into a second venue for the boxing, as well as approaching other schools with a view to delivering more after-school sport.”

Brogan hopes to establish a new programme permanently linked to the Three Peaks Challenge. “We would like to set up a whole new project to create a lasting legacy linked to the Three Peaks,” she added. “It’s important that the people who undertake this extremely difficult event know where their money is going.

“At the moment we are looking into a few options and we’d like to link our work to mental health – perhaps using sport or some kind of physical activity to help those with mental health problems. We hope to finalise these plans for a brand new community programme.”
National sport award for pioneering work programme

Northumbria University is celebrating another national honour after winning the British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) Workforce Programme of the Year award.

Northumbria’s innovative sport internship and volunteer programme impressed the BUCS judges with its ability to prepare students for the workplace. The programme offers Northumbria student volunteers and interns with the opportunity to work with sport staff in a variety of roles across events, marketing, media, strength and conditioning and nutrition, giving them first-hand experience of the varied roles involved in a sporting environment.

Northumbria’s Student and Staff Development Manager, Kate Hansbury, said: “The award reflects a very dedicated Sport team that includes staff and students working together on a daily basis on campus and throughout the community. We are exceptionally proud of the work that our students do and the impact they have within the University and our local communities. I’m sure they will all be delighted with this award.”

Director of Sport at Northumbria, Colin Stromsoy said: “It’s been another incredible year for sport at Northumbria and I couldn’t be happier. We pride ourselves on offering our students every opportunity to become workplace ready and there are so many examples of graduates who have been part of the Northumbria Sport team now making their mark in the wider world.”

The Workforce Programme of the Year award is a further endorsement of Northumbria’s aim to give students every opportunity to secure a work placement during their time at University and enhance their future careers. Northumbria provides students with the opportunities to develop their skills and connections by working with leading brands and organisations, which is one of the reasons why the University is ranked as one of the top 10 universities in the UK for graduates entering professional employment.

More than 430 employers around the world sponsor Northumbria’s students and more than 60 professional bodies sponsor the University’s courses. This creates growing numbers of opportunities for students to take up work placements or enter graduate employment.

Student volunteer Nicole Bailey works with sports teams as part of Northumbria’s Zambia Project, through Northumbria’s award-winning Workforce Programme