

Welcome to the latest Psychology newsletter

August 2019

In this month's newsletter, you'll find the regular updates on our activities, from learning and teaching achievements, new grants and publications, to the conferences and outreach events we've been part of.

To keep up to date with the latest news from the team as it happens, follow us on Twitter [@HWPsych](#) or find us on [Facebook](#).

Links: [Social Sciences](#) | [Psychology](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

The newsletter displays best on tablets (PDF attached also).



Follow our updates on Twitter [@HWPsych](#)

Three psychologists walk into a Fringe venue...

No, that's not the start of a bad joke but a summary of how three of our team spent a few days in August. Anna Sedda, Thusha Rajendran and Alan Gow appeared at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as part of the [Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas](#). This year Heriot-Watt had six academics in the programme, a record for our university. If you missed the shows, you can see more photos on our [Facebook](#) page.

While our main teaching and exams finish in May, the summer months continue to be a very busy and productive period. Our Masters students recently submitted their dissertations, some undergraduate students completed resit exams, the team have been updating teaching materials and preparing new courses for the next academic year, and many colleagues have continued to participate in conferences and events to disseminate their research. We're just a few weeks away from welcoming our new and returning students to class; enjoy those final few days off!



Forthcoming events

Research Seminars/Events
- Brain Health Day
28 August, Heriot-Watt University
[Details](#)

Full **Psychology Research Seminar** details are available on [Facebook](#).

In the news

Scottish Sun: [Top psychologist warns of dangers kids face during stressful wait for exam results](#)

Prima Magazine (print only): 'How good is your memory? Train your brain' (Michael Craig)

[Psychology academic shortlisted for 'Driving Global Impact' award](#)

[Heriot-Watt academics to educate and entertain at the Fringe](#)

[Staying sharp at the Edinburgh Fringe](#)

Conferences and outreach activities



The team regularly present at national and international conferences and at a range of public engagement events. A selection of the most recent include:



Our Psychology Research Seminars will restart with the new semester, but don't forget that other events continue to occur throughout the Summer; full details are available on [Facebook](#).

The Aphasia and Linguistics Network in Malaysia and Indonesia brought together researchers, linguists, speech-language therapists, neurolinguists from the UK, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia (24 August 2019). There were collaborations in terms of research, student exchange, publications and the development of resources geared towards improving SLT resources and services in the South East Asia region. The event was organized by Maria Garraffa (Edinburgh) and Poh Wei Lin (Malaysia).

Craig, M., Parra, M., Escudero, J., Strickland, S. & Dewar, M. (2019). Developing a new test to identify consolidation-related memory markers of normal ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. Alzheimer's Association International Conference, Los Angeles, California, 14th-18th July.

Sedda, A. (2019) Disgust for Dummies. Show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as part of Edinburgh Beltane's Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, Edinburgh, UK, 19th August.

Rajendran, T. (2019). OK Computer or Paranoid Android? Show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as part of Edinburgh Beltane's Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, Edinburgh, UK, 7th & 15th August.

Gow, A. J. (2019). This Show Will Make You Sharper! Show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as part of Edinburgh Beltane's Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas, Edinburgh, UK, 10th & 14th August.

Student voice

In "Student voice", we hear from our students. Every contribution is different, so if you have something you'd like to share, get in touch with [Alan Gow](#). This month we're hearing from Laura Manderson about her experience as a research assistant over the summer.

By Laura Manderson: My summer as a research assistant

This summer I was very lucky to be offered the opportunity to work as a research assistant. The project was led by Dr Maria Garraffa and the objective was to help improve practices used for treating multilingual stroke survivors affected by language disorders in countries where therapy is limited.

Stroke is the primary cause of adult disability and dependency in Asia and often leads to language impairment (aphasia). Despite this, Malaysia and Indonesia are two countries in which speech and language therapy (SLT) is an underdeveloped profession. My role was to create a tool to map current issues surrounding aphasia in these countries. I used information from published research to create a survey online, which addressed circumstances such as community, diagnosis, therapy, rehabilitation, research, education and how they relate to aphasia.

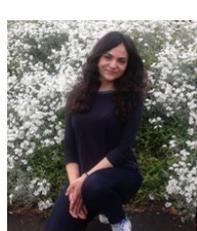
The survey was distributed to a small number of academics as a basis for discussion at an invited lecture that Dr Garraffa is attending in Malaysia. The next phase will see the survey sent to all speech and language therapists (SLTs) in Malaysia and Indonesia to gain further insight into gaps in the services.

This experience has given me valuable practical skills that I can use in the future—for example, creating an online survey suitable for psychological investigation. In addition, the consideration of prior research allowed me to refine my critical analysis skills.

Ultimately, it is hoped that this project will provide professionals in Malaysia and Indonesia with tests to assess people with aphasia, targeting aspects of language. This has strongly contributed to my final year project in which I will build an experiment using the same tests to uncover vulnerable elements of language in adolescence.

Meet the team

Each month we profile members of our team based across our campuses in Edinburgh, Dubai and Malaysia.



Ailiki Papa, PhD Student (Edinburgh)

Ailiki Papa obtained an MSc in the Evolution of Language and Cognition (University of Edinburgh, 2017). Her dissertation explored the effects of cultural transmission on the evolution of random sketches. She started her PhD at Heriot-Watt University, supervised by Monica Tamariz and Mioara Cristea, in September 2017. Her research focuses on the mechanisms and biases underlying the social transmission of cultural traits in humans. In 2019 she did a 3-month internship for PhD students at the Scottish Government working as a data analyst.



Ryan Gray, Research Assistant (Edinburgh)

Ryan Gray, research from Heriot-Watt University in 2018 with a degree in Psychology. During his time here he completed a research project measuring the effects of life-long musical activity on cognitive ageing. The resultant paper has just been accepted by Aging, Neuropsychology and Cognition. After taking time out to do some traveling, Ryan is back at Heriot-Watt working as a research assistant in the Ageing Lab. His current role involves working alongside the charity, Cycling Without Age, to measure the impact that trips out on a specially designed trishaw have on the mood and wellbeing of older adults in supported housing and care home environments.



Dr Joe Stubbersfield, Assistant Professor (Edinburgh)

Joe completed his PhD at Durham University, before working as a postdoctoral researcher on projects in the School of Biology at St Andrews University and the Anthropology Department of Durham University. His research draws on the fields of cultural evolution, cognitive psychology, social learning, evolutionary psychology and cognitive anthropology to examine how cognitive biases influence the cultural transmission of information, primarily focusing on narratives. He has used this approach to research the dissemination of urban legends, conspiracy theories and medical misinformation in the UK and rural Sri Lanka. He joined Psychology at Heriot-Watt this August.



Dr Mercedes Sheen, Associate Professor (Dubai)

Mercedes joined Heriot Watt in August and has taken over the role as Academic Head of Psychology in Dubai. Mercedes received her PhD at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch New Zealand on false memories where she coined a new type of memory error "disputed memories" which resulted from many arguments about her shared past with her identical twin sister! Her main research interests now lie in the field of Social Cognition, particularly how it relates to perception of human facial attractiveness.

Team news

Mercedes Sheen joined the team as Associate Professor in Dubai, and Joe Stubbersfield as Assistant Professor in Edinburgh.