On the 13th March, we stopped face-to-face teaching in the department in response to COVID-19. It was only hours before the College followed suit. This move was unprecedented, involving the shutdown of all research requiring face to face contact with participants, as well as teaching. The success of the transfer of our work online, was not a foregone conclusion. However, by the beginning of the following week, the department was ready and successfully completed the term online. The next challenge of moving all assessments online was also achieved over Easter in good time for the summer exams, while the Certs, BA Ed and FY courses continued to develop their online provision.

This seamless move was achieved without top down guidance from our, ever burgeoning, brigade of regulatory bodies, or our professional body, all of whom followed the lead of departments, here and in the sector. We have now successfully completed the academic year (although resits await), and we should pause to congratulate ourselves on this achievement. It was made possible by all staff, administrative, IT and academic pulling together, pragmatically, to make it happen. Many challenges remain, higher workloads, lack of research time, childcare, and negotiating the top down demands of our regulatory and professional bodies, now they have got up to speed. However, as we saw at the recent Staff meeting
during Gillian Forrester’s presentation, we have a sensible plan to do this and ensure we have excellent online provision for 2020-21. It is also crucial that we recommence research as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we should all take some time off over the summer to relax with our families and recharge our batteries!

Professor Jonathan A Smith elected as an Honorary Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS)

Image: Professor Jonathan A Smith, newly elected as Honorary Fellow to the BPS

Congratulations to our colleague, Professor Jonathan A Smith, who has recently been elected as an Honorary Fellow of the British Psychological Society. The award is one of the highest accolades the BPS bestow, recognising his outstanding contribution to the discipline over the last twenty years. Professor Smith’s work includes the development and establishment of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a new qualitative research methodology, which has had exceptional impact nationally and internationally. Professor Smith, said:

“I am very proud to be awarded this Honorary Fellowship of the British Psychological Society. As well as recognising the work I have done as an academic psychologist, it is also an acknowledgement of the growing importance of qualitative research to the discipline. A key imperative in my career has been to help carve a significant space for the detailed qualitative examination of personal experience within psychology. I am also proud to see the large amount of experiential qualitative research now being done by people in many disciplines and from all over the world.”

Professor Smith has worked at Birkbeck for twenty years and has become a leading figure in qualitative research in psychology. As an Honorary Fellow, Smith joins world-renowned figures such as Carl Jung, Noam Chomsky, Jean Piaget and Anna Freud. To find out more about Professor Smith’s research, visit his Birkbeck staff page here.
Dr Rich Cook awarded the 2020 Spearman Medal

In March, Dr Rich Cook, was awarded the 2020 Spearman Medal by the British Psychological Society. The medal is the foremost recognition in Psychology for early career researchers in the UK, awarding exceptional published contributions to the discipline. Colleagues across the department extend their congratulations to Rich for this huge success! For a full write-up about Rich’s research and the award, please see the BPS article here.

Dr Cook joins two other colleagues within the Department who have been recipients of the award in the past ten years. Professor Angelica Ronald (2012) and Professor Iroise Dumontheil (2015) were previously recognised for their outstanding early career contributions.

Congratulations in order for departmental promotions

Congratulations to our colleagues who have achieved recent promotions. Iroise Dumontheil and Tim Smith have been promoted to Professor, and Clare Press, Emma Meaburn, Marie Smith and Adam Tierney have been promoted to Reader.

Centre for Educational Neuroscience's new publication

Education Neuroscience: Development Across the Life Span, by Professors Michael S. C. Thomas, Denis Mareschal and Iroise Dumontheil was published in April by Routledge. It brings together the latest knowledge on educational neuroscience from a life-span perspective, offering state-of-the-art, authoritative research findings from cognitive neuroscience approaches to education which link through to evidence-based recommendations for classroom practice.
New project launched on the well-being of young LGBTQ* people during lockdown

**Dr Fiona Tasker** is the UK Director for a new international collaboration which will investigate the mental health - during the Covid-19 pandemic - of people aged 18-35 who identify as LGBTQ*. The project, along with partners in Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Chile, Mexico and Brazil, has launched a new survey to examine well-being under the conditions of increased stress caused by the pandemic and lockdown.

To find out more about the survey or take part, please visit: [https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LGBTQ_C-19lockdown](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LGBTQ_C-19lockdown)

New arrivals!

Finally, congratulations are extended from all of us to **Dr Anna Gui** on the safe arrival of baby Giovanni in April, and to **Professor Tim Smith** (and his wife Rachael) on the safe arrival of baby Arlo in February.
Top Media Mentions

Our staff have been attracting high profile media attention

**Professor Angelica Ronald** was interviewed by *Nature* for an article on the Hidden Links between Mental Disorders which was published on the 5 May.

![Image: Melt Tree by Hana Jung via CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 https://www.flickr.com/photos/from_drawing/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/from_drawing/)

**Professor Denis Mareschal** has been interviewed for a number of pieces in the last period, including an interview with Martin Kelner on *TalkRadio*, Saturday 23 May about ToddlerLab and an article in *Wired* about the toddler brain which was recently published.

Both **Dr. Leslie Tucker** and **Professor Denis Mareschal** were interviewed by The Times for an article on 16 May about ToddlerLab. The article is available on The Times [website](https://www.thetimes.co.uk) to subscribers.

At the beginning of April, **Professor Tim Smith** was featured in an article in the *Financial Times*, ‘How much TV should your children be watching right now?’ He was also featured in an article in the *New York Times* in February in an article about subtitles in films and the brain.

A [press release](https://example.com) went out in April for the collaborative neuroscience project on which **Professor Fred Dick** is a partner. Following the project’s publication of their article in *Nature Neuroscience*, the University of Newcastle, which is leading the project, put out a press release which has been picked up by various agencies. The project has discovered an earlier evolution of the human language pathway than was previously thought, pushing back its origin by at least 20 million years. See the article in *Nature Neuroscience* [here](https://example.com).

**Dr. Alex Shepherd** was featured in the BPS magazine, *The Psychologist*, in their special issue on Vision and Perception in April. They led with her article entitled ‘Many take visual perception for granted...’.
Public Engagement and Talks

BRiC and Breast Cancer Now

On 21 May, BRiC was part of a live event with Breast Cancer Now, the UK’s largest breast cancer charity for research and care. Professor Naz Derakhshan answered questions from the public about the emotional needs of women with breast cancer as part of a special podcast for mental health awareness week. The podcast was live on Instagram and has had over 28K users on Facebook.

Naz has also collaborated with Breast Cancer now to produce podcasts which address resilience building for nurses working with breast cancer patients. She delivered the podcast How to cope with the emotional effects of breast cancer with Dr Tasha Gandamihardija, which is available online [here](#). For further information about Naz’s collaboration and podcasts, visit her Twitter feeds: @ProfNDerakhshan @BC_Resilience.

GEL Lab


Despite lockdown, the GEL Lab has continued its series of events and blogs to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rosalind Franklin. PhD student Chloe Austerberry wrote a blog post reflecting on the contribution of Franklin to the development of genetics research at a time during which women remained largely excluded from science and academia. Though Franklin’s work was mostly uncredited at the time, her work is now finally acknowledged as being key to understanding the structure of DNA.

In May, Professor Angelica Ronald delivered a talk about the life and work of Rosalind Franklin, and her influence on the team at the GEL Lab, as part of the Birkbeck Inspires series. This is now available via [YouTube](#).

Angelica was also interviewed in May for a podcast by the Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health.
Centre for Educational Neuroscience

In March, Professor Michael Thomas and Professor Kaska Porayska-Pomsta, representing the Centre for Educational Neuroscience, were invited by the All Parliamentary Group on Artificial Intelligence to speak about how AI systems may contribute to the future of education. They discussed their work on the UnLocke Project in which the team developed learning activities to help primary age children which science and maths learning.

Harm reduction for sex-workers

Dr. Belinda Brooks-Gordon has continued her outreach and engagement work with activist groups and policy makers, including hosting a Colloquium on Social Justice at the Institute of Criminology at University of Cambridge on 26 February 2020. The event was funded by the Cambridge Socio-Legal Group, and included invitees from the Home Office, the Office of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Amnesty International, and the English Collective of Prostitutes. The afternoon was a problem-solving workshop based on the Harm Reduction Compass being developed by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for Sex Working and Prostitution, ACC Dan Vajzovic. The workshop assisted the police develop and progress the compass as an effective harm reduction tool.

Image: Belinda Brooks-Gordon (front right) and colleagues including Professor Teela Sanders (front left) in the Boardroom at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge. Image courtesy of Belinda Brooks-Gordon.

Resilience and Covid-19

Dr. Ana da Cunha Lewin and Dr. Vanna Cotzia have contributed a number of talks to the Birkbeck Inspires series which provide information to support resilience and family well-being during Covid-19. The talks cover topics such as technology and mental health, exercise and well-being, coping with anxiety and supporting children and their learning. They are available online via the Birkbeck Inspires website.
Waiting Times project and Covid-19

Our colleagues in the Department for Psychosocial Studies wanted to alert us to their involvement with the Waiting Times project which is funded by Wellcome Trust to explore the psychosocial experience of waiting in the context of healthcare. Members of their team have written a series of articles relevant to waiting during the Covid-19 pandemic. To find out more about their project and explore connections around the topic of mental health and accessing healthcare please visit: https://wellcomeopenresearch.org/articles/5-128. Twitter @WhatisWaiting

Other public presentations, invited talks and event attendance

Prior to lockdown, staff members contributed to invited talks around the UK and continued to contribute virtually during the pandemic.

In February, Professor Martin Eimer delivered his talk The control of attention in visual to the Department of Psychology, University of Exeter and the Department of Psychology, Brunel University.

Dr. Fiona Tasker presented at an event on 12 February organised by Birkbeck Library to celebrate LGBT History Month and Love Data Week. The title of her talk was: Through the Lens of Data: A Brief & Personal History of LGBT+ Parenting Research.

In May, Dr. Clare Press gave a departmental seminar entitled The online and offline influences of action on perception at the Cognitive Science colloquium hosted by the Central European University, Budapest.

In June, Clare also gave a Vision Sciences Society meeting talk hosted in Florida, entitled The neurocomputational mechanisms of action-outcome prediction in V1. She delivered this talk as a recorded version for the virtual conference and as one of a selection of live talks.

Professor Naz Derakhshan was an invited speaker at Lady Margaret Hall College Oxford, delivering her talk: Empowering women’s emotional and cognitive health in education.
Awards and Recognition

BPS Cognitive Psychology Section Award

The 2020 BPS Cognitive Psychology Section Award, which recognises outstanding published contributions to research in the area of Cognitive Psychology, was awarded to Professor Richard Cooper and colleagues for their 2018 paper:


Public Engagement Awards

We are delighted that the *Me, Human* project, led by Dr. Gillian Forrester, achieved two wins in the Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards 2020. Both the Live Science and Psyched! talk series were highly commended and winners of the ‘Communicating Research’ category.

The College released an online video of the awards which is available on YouTube. They asked nominees to submit videos to summarise their project and describe what public engagement with research means to them. Clips from the *Me, Human* team’s contribution to this video can be seen here.

A full version of the video made by the team can also be viewed on YouTube. You may be able to spot colleagues Dr Simon Green (as a frog) and Georgina Donati (as a gorilla) and Gilly herself as a monotreme. The video was created with the help of Gilly’s husband, who provided software support and daughter, Edie, who very skilfully made the plasticine animals – well done Edie!

Dr. Alon Zivony was also recognised in the early career section of the awards and was Highly Commended for his public lectures *The limitations of attention in everyday life: can we overcome them?* which he delivered to diverse public audiences, from students to retirees and also to people serving time in prison.
Breast Cancer Blog Award

The BRiC blog, Panning for Gold, led by Professor Naz Derakhshian, was amongst the Winners of Best Breast Cancer blog for 2020.
Departmental Staff Awards (2019 -2020)

Image: Fireworks, credit Epic Fireworks via CC BY 2.0

Every year our students nominate and vote for their favourite lecturers and supervisors. Staff received some really warm and delightful comments from undergraduate and postgraduate students across the department. Thank you so much to all who voted and for giving hardworking staff a boost at the end of the academic year!

Outstanding Personal Tutor
UG: Ana Lewin
PG: Iroise Dumontheil

Outstanding Project Supervisor
UG: Michael Mallaghan (although caveat, he does not supervise dissertations - so the 'outstanding supervisor was likely taken in the Personal Tutor capacity!)
PG: Naz Derakhshan

Outstanding Non-Staff member
Michael Papasavva

Outstanding Support Staff
UG: Claire Santorelli and Germain Symons
PG: Ida Akhtar

Outstanding Lecturer
UG: Michael Mallaghan
PG: Naz Derakhshan

Make up a category for your favourite staff member:
Mind Blowing Lecturer (UG): Ulrike Hahn
Most engaging lecturer (UG): Adam Tierney
Quickest and most efficient e-mail replies(UG): Atsushi Senju
Most Engaging Lecture (PG): Denis Mareschal
Supportive lecturer (PG): Dr. Iroise Dumontheil
Best Christmas jumper (PG): Michael Thomas
Best Essay Marker (PG): Matt Longo
## Grants

Congratulations to all our staff receiving research grants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>FUNDER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alon Zivony</td>
<td>EU</td>
<td>TDoTA: Temporal Dynamics of Transient Attention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iroise Dumontheil</td>
<td>Leverhulme Trust</td>
<td>Can cognitive control training be used to change habits of thinking?</td>
<td>12,680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denis Mareschal</td>
<td>EPSRC</td>
<td>Human-like Computing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulrike Hahn</td>
<td>NESTA</td>
<td>Crowd Prediction with Algorithmically Moderated Social Networks</td>
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<td>Emily Jones</td>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Scalable Transdiagnostic Early Assessment of Mental Health (STREAM)</td>
<td>410,036</td>
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Conference Activity

Normal conference activity has been disrupted by Covid-19. Nonetheless, prior to the disruption Professor Martin Eimer presented a keynote lecture at the 7th Conference on Cognition Research of the Israeli Society for Cognitive Psychology, Akko (Israel), February 2020, entitled ‘The control of attention in visual search.’

In June, Dr. Clare Press attended the Neural Control of Movement Symposium which took place virtually.

In June, Dr. Alon Zivony gave a talk in a Virtual Working Memory Symposium hosted by University of Texas, entitled ‘Perceptual competition between targets and distractors determines working memory access and produces intrusion errors in RSVP tasks’. The talk is available here. Alon also gave a talk in the virtual Vision Sciences Society meeting, entitled ‘The speed of attentional engagement and its relation to working memory encoding in RSVP tasks’. The talk is available via YouTube here.

Doctoral Activity

Theses awarded

Congratulations to all those successfully defending their theses

Candidate: Rachel Starr
Title: Apprehending Paintings: an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Experience of Viewing Art.
Supervisor: Prof Jonathan A Smith
Examiners: Dr Michael Larkin (Aston University) and Dr Jorella Andrews (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Theses Examined

Staff from the department are frequently invited to examine doctoral theses at institutions across the country

Dr. Iroise Dunontheil was one of the external examiners for Kristian Tempelmans Plat’s thesis at the University of Reading. The thesis title is The influence of reward on cognitive empathy and supervisors were Professor Bhismadev Chakrabarti and Professor Kou Murayama.

Dr. Clare Press was one of the external examiners for two theses, one in Italy and the other in the Netherlands. She examined Marco Soriano’s thesis entitled Investigating the sensitivity of the motor system to observed movement kinematics using Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation at IIT, Genova, Italy. The supervisors were: Dr. Cristina Becchio and Dr. Andrea Cavallo.

In the Netherlands (at the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, Nijmegen) Clare examined David Richter’s thesis entitled Prediction throughout visual cortex: How statistical regularities shape sensory processing. The supervisor was Professor Floris de Lange.
Publications

Accepted Manuscripts for the majority of these publications are available via Birkbeck’s repository, BIROn.

Journal Articles

Alidu, L., Grunfeld E.A. (In press) “What a dog will see and kill, a cat will see and ignore it’: an exploration of health-related help-seeking among older Ghanaian men residing in Ghana and the United Kingdom”. *British Journal of Health Psychology.*


Doro, M., Bellini, F., Brigadoi, S., Eimer, M. & Dell’Acqua, R. (2020). A bilateral N2pc (N2pcb) component is elicited by search targets on the vertical midline. *Psychophysiology, 57*, e13512.


Saito, K., Kachlicka, M., Sun, H., Tierney, A. (In press) Domain-general auditory processing as an anchor of post-pubertal L2 pronunciation learning: behavioural and neurophysiological investigations of perceptual acuity, age, experience, development, and attainment. *Journal of Memory and Language*.


Symeonidou, I., Dumonthel, I., Ferguson, H.J., & Breheny, R. (In press) Adolescents are delayed at inferring complex social intentions in others, but not basic (false) beliefs: An eye movement investigation. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*.


Books

Book chapters


Book reviews