



# School of Education

# LEARNING STRANDS

ISSUE 4 AUTUMN/WINTER 2020

## Welcome

to the 4th School of Education newsletter. Perhaps like me, you have been following the twists and turns of the US Presidential election. If so, you may have spotted three simple words on the (now) President Elect's lectern: 'Build Back Better'.

Like all good political aphorisms, there is a pithy, memorable, quality to this phrase. It demands something of us; it is a call to action; a challenge not to revert to the status quo, but to seek to actively seize the moment for improvement. In the context of the global pandemic, it lifts our heads towards different, better, possible futures.

Closer to home, [Green New Deal UK](#) has employed 'Build Back Better' as a collaborative clarion call around the 'need for something new', as we turn in hope towards a post-pandemic world.

The UK Conservative party also seeks to 'Build Back Better', as does the [World Economic Forum](#). In fact, there is a seeming political agreement, that in this moment in history, there is a progressive thrust of humanity to Build Back Better. Unsurprisingly, what this might look like in practice is more contentious:

- > What are we to build?
- > How should 'building' take place?
- > By whom?
- > What have we lost that we need to 'build back'?
- > What might 'better' look like?

'Build Back Better' is actually from the lexicon of [United Nations](#) disaster relief, being first introduced in 2006 following the [Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004](#) and providing an approach to disaster recovery:



Disasters have been recognized and leveraged as opportunities for change and improvement and, in some cases, are even considered as a "helpful interruption" to previously unchallenged inadequate policies and practices, such as those that disadvantaged certain groups, for example persons with disabilities<sup>1</sup>

There is a complexity here which requires careful unpacking. Despite some of the dissonance in these words, we can perhaps agree that this disruptive moment, notwithstanding its horror and anguish, can challenge us to create something of value, in spite of everything.

As Education looks to the future, we are excited about the launch of our Counselling Research Centre, as we seek to support the wellbeing of our communities (p.3). We have reformulated our research themes (p.11); and are seeking to further build our new departments (pp. 2, 4, 5, 9) in pursuit of the [University's 2040 vision](#) 'in the service of others'. As we think about what Build Back Better means for us; we can look back with pride at the ways in which our school, students and staff alike, has risen to the challenge of 2020.

Warm greeting from all in Education.

**Dr David Smith**  
Head of School of Education

## Inside...

Counselling, Wellbeing & Educational Psychology (Department) Focus	P.2
Early Years & Childhood Education (Department) Focus	P.4
ITE (Department) Focus	P.5
Postgraduate Taught & Professional Learning (Department) Focus	P.9
Research Update	P.11
Student Spotlight	P.13
Staff Spotlight	P.14
Events	P.16
Research Presentations & Publications	P.17

This newsletter was created by the School Communication Team. We would like to extend our thanks to all our contributors.

If you would like to contribute to our next issue or have any questions, please contact: Rosemond Cochrane,  
✉ [educationcomms@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:educationcomms@abdn.ac.uk)



<sup>1</sup> G. Fernandez, I. Ahmed (2019). "Build back better" approach to disaster recovery: Research trends since 2006. *Progress in Disaster Science*, Volume 1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2019.100003>

# Counselling, Wellbeing & Educational Psychology (Department) Focus

## Introduction

The importance of good mental health has never had such a prominent role in our collective thinking. In the Department, we are continuing to play our part in providing people with the skills needed to support the increasing number of individuals looking for help as we seek to address this global issue.

As Anne and Janet discuss (p.3), plans for our new research centre are now well-advanced and we expect to open it in January. In addition, to facilitating our research work and to providing our ever-increasing numbers of Master's students with high quality practice placements, it will also be of great benefit in supporting our local community.

One in five young people can experience issues with their mental health, providing them with support requires specialist knowledge and skills. Recently, we were successful in a bid to the University Innovation Fund for the resources to help us develop a new children and young person's counselling certificate. This certificate will be either integrated into our Master's programme, or be available as a stand-alone qualification for previously qualified counsellors and psychotherapists. We plan on launching this new course next summer.

The skills that underpin counselling have much wider application than for client-counsellor therapy alone. Our new skills courses, now all fully online, are proving very attractive with large numbers of students, both from within the undergraduate population and from outside the University. Traditionally, taken over two years, our one-year variant of these courses, offered for the first time this session has proved so popular with people from organisations outside the University, that we have had to double the number of cohorts that we have accepted.

The hard work of Sue Black and her team in developing our new online courses is helping to open the courses to a wider range of individuals and also to equip the students with key digital counselling skills. The counselling skills associated with working online are clearly important in the current environment, but in a remote and rural location, such as the north and north east of Scotland, they will continue to be very important going forward.

Finally, with colleagues across the school, we are working on developing a new undergraduate degree that will provide graduates with the skills to practice as counsellors. This is an exciting development for us, so - watch this space.

Professor Peter McGeorge | Head of Counselling, Wellbeing & Educational Psychology



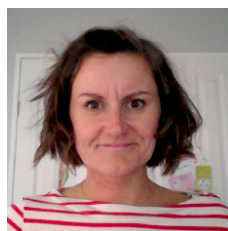
## Meet The Counselling Centre Team



*Janet Watson*  
Lecturer



*Janet Mowatt*  
Practice Placement Coordinator



*Julie Pose*  
Teaching Assistant



*Anne Smith*  
Teaching Fellow



*Sue Black*  
Lecturer

---

# Counselling, Wellbeing & Educational Psychology (Department) Focus

---

## The Bounds, Counselling Research Centre



The Counselling department is buzzing with excitement as we prepare for the arrival of our largest-yet student cohort on the postgraduate diploma, get ready to launch our very own counselling and research centre - working title, The Bounds - and start to run our first totally virtual counselling skills course.

Head of Department Professor Peter McGeorge, and PG Programme Director Anne Smith - along with the new core team - are working hard to put together working policies, an ethical stance, and a handbook for prospective clients in the student and local communities, as we look towards opening the University's counselling centre in January 2021.

The centre will be based in the Humanity Annexe in College Bounds on the very edge of the Old Aberdeen campus; hence, the working title, and fulfils one of the university's aims for 2040, to provide a direct link between learning and support, and a dynamic conversation between academia and the local community.

It fulfils a long-held dream for Anne as Aberdeen joins universities, such as Nottingham and Strathclyde.

The aim is for our centre to become a byword for excellence in service and research going forward, and The Bounds will ensure our students will have the best possible start to their careers as counsellors, while fulfilling Bishop Elphinstone's founding statement in 1495 - part of the university's institutional strategy for 2040:

**“Open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others.”**

The additional places for counselling practice - students need a minimum of 100 hours in placement before they can take their diploma - mean there is less of a burden on external agencies to find room and less stress for the students themselves trying to find placements, particularly important this year as we get ready to welcome 38 people to our postgraduate counselling programme.

Places on our programme, focusing purely on person-centred counselling, are becoming much sought-after and students are travelling from all over Scotland to get the kind of training they're looking for. Our reputation is growing steadily, and the introduction of the Counselling and Listening Skills

Programme, a fully-online course, can only be a positive addition as more people try to train for a new career alongside other life commitments. The four modules of this new course - written by Undergraduate Programme Director Sue Black - leads to a Certificate in Counselling Skills from the University of Aberdeen and fulfil the university's longer-term goal of helping students fit study around lives and work with blended learning counselling skills that can be studied in an asynchronous way, over one-year variant or the more usual two years.

Through the summer, the core team has been working hard - and doing additional training ourselves - to ensure a first-class experience for new and returning students in September, amid the uncertainty of where and how the programme is to be delivered as Covid 19 continues to challenge our traditional ways of working.

Face-to-face work is vital to what we do in the Counselling Department and finding ways of doing that using Microsoft Teams and Collaborate is - as with other disciplines - of the utmost importance to us now. Definitely a case of watch this online space!

# Early Years & Childhood Education (Department) Focus

## Introduction

### RISING TO THE 'COVID' CHALLENGE IN THE EARLY YEARS...

Following the move to working from home at the University in March, which was followed shortly afterwards by the closure of schools and other Early Years settings in Scotland, the BA Childhood Programme had to be altered dramatically. The programme is work based and consists of practical elements which are integrated into Early Years Practice during the students' studies. Therefore, it was particularly difficult to introduce meaningful changes for the students to complete their individual courses.

The Early Years team rose to the challenge, changing eight BACP courses, focusing on providing additional online materials like video clips of other settings where students could assess learning and involvement of children. The SSSC, governing body for the Early Years, approved the changes.

Feedback from students was very positive: "Can I just say I think you have done exceptionally well to have already planned the option of a theory based assignment for the unit. Providing this, and in such a timely fashion really enables us as students to carry on with our course work the best we can in difficult circumstances".

We would be well placed if we had to reinstate the 'covid' versions for our courses in the near future.

Catriona McDonald | Interim Head of Early Years and Childhood Education



## Student's 'Clash Trajectory Schema' Leaflet is Commended

One of the students on the BA Childhood Practice created a leaflet on 'Trajectory Schema' which was notably commended by Professor Tina Bruce, a well-known authority in the Early Years Sector.

"Hello, my name is Siobhan and I am an early years practitioner within Aberdeenshire. I had the pleasure of meeting Stella Louis at a Schema training course. At the course Stella looked at some work I had done on Schemas to help other practitioners and parents. She was very impressed with my work and she offered me an opportunity to create a leaflet for parents for clash trajectory Schemas as this is one that is less known and it can sometimes be seen as negative behaviours.

I was excited to take up the offer and within a year of observing children showing this type of Schema and by gathering evidence I created the leaflet. All parents and children were asked if they wanted to participate prior to sending the completed leaflet to Stella.

After I sent the leaflet to Stella she provided me with amazing feedback and then passed the leaflet onto Professor Tina Bruce. I was over the moon when Tina herself gave me positive feedback too. It was amazing to have such well-known names of early years compliment my work."

Siobhan Douglas, BA Childhood Practice



# ITE (Department) Focus

## Introduction

As with the rest of the School of Education, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) department is largely working remotely. In working remotely, the entire team has displayed their resourcefulness and innovation in adapting their teaching to be provided online. Relationships have remained a strong focus of their work and you can see from the PGDE's articles that relationships are strong and courses have enabled students to engage with their learning. Aloyise talks about the Digital Learning Framework (p8) and how her work with this has helped prepare and frame the work the ITE department is undertaking with its Virtual Practicum. The articles from the wider ITE team give you a glimpse into the thoughtful and caring work that the entire ITE department are undertaking to ensure that teacher education continues to flourish during these unusual times.

Dr John Mynott | Head of Initial Teacher Education



## PGDE Secondary Team

Starting a PGDE programme is always likely to prompt mixed emotions: excitement, anticipation and, perhaps, apprehension. This has no doubt been heightened this year with the pandemic creating less certainty than usual about what lies ahead. For our PGDE Secondary team, our programme has always been blended by design, and we have found ourselves well placed to start the programme online with our students in a positive, productive and welcoming manner.

A priority for the tutor team is how to build relationships with our students, as this is at the heart of our interactive and student-centred approach to learning and teaching. Our challenge, then, has been how best to build relationships with students whilst working wholly online. This challenge has seen us using the wide range of tools and platforms at our disposal in a range of creative ways. This began even before the Welcome Lecture, with students offered opportunities to meet informally with their tutors online and to become familiar with the platforms they would be using.

The Welcome Lecture provided an opportunity for our students to meet the co-ordinator and support teams, representatives from AUSA and Student Support, and other partners (eg Blackwells). All of whom were keen to reiterate the support and resources that are available to our students, whether they are on campus, in halls or at home in their kitchens.

Pedagogically, we continue to utilise a flipped learning model which offers our students opportunities to work together to engage critically with a range of academic readings, ideas and educational issues, as well as equipping them with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to become effective classroom practitioners. Our live, synchronous, sessions are delivered through Blackboard Collaborate and students engage in a range of interactive workshops with both their curricular and their Professional Studies groups.

Students have been able to engage not only in whole class discussion, but also in group discussion and group work through the use of break out rooms. They have got to know each other and been able to work together to discuss, to perform, to create electronic mind maps and presentations and to undertake micro-teaching on key topics.



We have used everything from polls, chat boxes, emojis and discussion board posts to gather students' ideas and views, and to enable them to develop their thinking on key topics.

Our goal is to ensure our students emerge as reflective, reflexive and enquiring practitioners, and we are already en route to achieving this with this year's cohort.

"The PGDE course at the University of Aberdeen is an exciting course. The classes are so inspiring and give you loads of ideas and practices which you can implement in the classroom and on placement. The tutors and the staff at the University are really approachable and are on hand if you need guidance and support."

Stuart M.  
PGDE S Geography student

"all of the [...] course leaders have put in an immense amount of effort to ensure that we get as much understanding and experience as possible out of our course this year. They have provided us with a wealth of information regarding how the MyAberdeen platform works and how we can best utilise it. The lecturers at Aberdeen University show devotion to their subjects and their students by creating an open and welcoming online community. This is a community I am thrilled to be a part of."

Kimberly D.  
PGDE S English student

# ITE (Department) Focus

## PGDE Primary Team

### Overcoming, and embracing, some of the challenges of learning and teaching online

**f** "It's ok – I've heard Aberdeen Uni have got it sussed with online learning,"

This was a quote from the PGDE Scottish Primary Facebook page prior to the course starting...and in many ways, they were right.

Following reaccreditation last year, the PGDE programme has embraced an innovative blended learning model, and therefore the transition to a year shaped by Covid-19 was in some ways easier than it may have been.

So, as we celebrate a positive start to the new academic year, we are already reviewing and critically considering both the benefits and challenges of online learning.

### Encouraging students to contribute to discussions

Creating a supportive and participatory ethos and environment with the students was something we were keen to achieve from the outset of the programme. We knew from last year's teaching that the online environment has many affordances which encouraged participation, creativity and autonomy, and we wanted to harness this functionality to ensure we could 'hear' our new students' voices.

However, since having 218 microphones on at once was not an option on Collaborate, we invited the students to share their understanding in different, and often very simple, ways online.

Online 'norms' were shared from the start, cameras were encouraged, mics switched on in breakout rooms, plenty of time given to student/staff interactions in the 'chat' function, and whiteboard graffitiing celebrated. This enabled us to get a sense of where the students were coming from, so we could value their experiences and begin to unpick some of their assumptions.

### Creating opportunities for embodied learning experiences

Last year, on campus, we embraced opportunities for active, participatory experiences, and ensured these were central to our new programme design. Our challenge, therefore, was how we could now create these embodied experiences online. As an example, clearly the Outdoor Learning input had to be carefully rethought. Normally the students would have a short classroom input on theory followed by a field trip to the beach. This year we held a team-taught, live session online, then the students were required to engage with offline asynchronous tasks. The learning was carefully devised to be active, embodied and inclusive, and encourage students to get outside and experience the theory we had presented online.

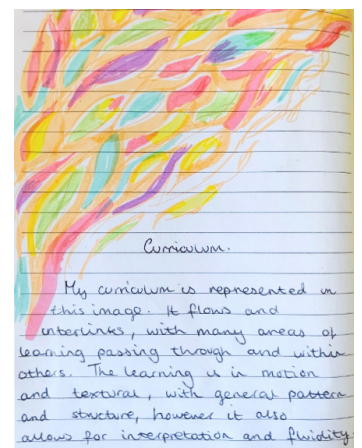
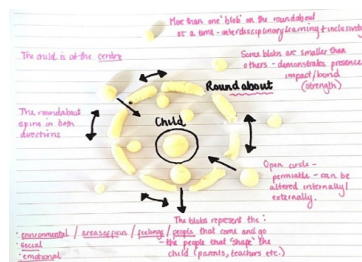
Students enthusiastically embraced the activities and made powerful reflections in the discussion forums. Families and friends joined in where they could, and the photos of completed bug hotels and re-purposed planters were magnificent. What came through most powerfully was the fact that with fewer resources and more constraints, our working became more creative and we built a strong community of learners. Students and staff Tweeted about our activities on social media, allowing our PGDE sustainability and creativity agenda to spread wider. The majority of PGDE primary students appear open to these creative invitations. On another occasion they were asked to prepare playdough for a professional studies tutorial. Students were then invited to use the malleable

material to support them in the complex and abstract notion of 'curriculum'. Playdough was created and manipulated in many homes across the country, and beyond, while students gave thought to different dimensions, such as values and structures. Images of personalised curricula began to fill our discussion thread as students engaged with creativity, thoughtfulness and enthusiasm.

### The complexity of student participation

One persistent challenge, however, is ensuring that **all** students participate in online discussions and with asynchronous materials in ways that are 'expected', 'hoped for' or enabled through the online tools available. Of course, we know that students exercise their right to participate in ways they are comfortable with, and we are mindful that perceived radio silence does not necessarily mean students aren't thinking, engaged or committed. It is in some of these more nuanced scenarios that face-to-face interactions are missed. The opportunity to quietly and subtly engage with a student, to quite simply check they are ok. In this instance, technology can feel somewhat blunt, clumsy and ultimately lacking.

In general though, we are embracing the affordances and challenges of online learning and it's working. Yes, it's hard work, but we are modelling effective collaborative work as a PGDE primary team, and we are keeping relationships, communication and personalisation central to our programme. We haven't necessarily got everything 'sussed', but we're embracing the journey.



# ITE (Department) Focus

## Perspectives on Distance Learning

Alyson Young

Giving the students on the PGDE (Primary) programme an insight into the challenges of distance learning during lockdown required honest and authentic partnership working with those teachers who were on the “frontline”. What was unexpected was the beneficial reflections for all the parties involved.

I reached out to the staff at my children’s school, Glenbervie Primary, and invited them to join me in an informal conversation about their experiences of distance learning. I was joined by Lisa McConachie, Gail Sangster and Chris Tattersall. As a parent, I was able to bring an alternative perspective. I invited my children to join in too.

The conversations took place over Teams and was available to the students as a recording. The school very much placed health and wellbeing of all at the centre of their distance learning ethos and demonstrated strong teamwork when creating learning contexts for the children. The inclusive pedagogy demonstrated by the school linked in well with the central messages of the PGDE (primary) course.

For me, as both a parent and teacher, the most striking aspect of the conversation was the positivity with which the staff spoke about their experiences. The teachers spoke about how they developed more meaningful relationships with both learners and their families, which, as a parent, I saw first-hand. As a lecturer in ITE, this was further emphasised to our students the fundamental importance of building relationships with the children with whom they work.

As useful as this was for our students, this conversation was also very beneficial for Head Teacher Jenny Glennie. Having watched the video, she was able to use the different perspectives to inform her recovery planning.



“It was lovely to get this insight to our lockdown experience and has helped me with recovery plans and next steps for the year.”

Jenny Glennie  
Head Teacher, Glenbervie Primary

“as we are learning to become teachers during a global pandemic, we have the rare opportunity to learn from the current teachers...This video has given me some great insight and reassurance about it all”

Lotte, PGDE Primary Student

Allowing our PGDE (Primary) students to be part of the school’s reflections on this exceptional period of learning has given them better understanding of the considerations for learners, both online and in class, in today’s challenging climate. And for the school, it has allowed them to pass on real-life learning points to the next generation of student teachers, in a period where we have no idea what the coming months and years will bring.

In conclusion, Mrs Glennie highlighted that this experience has given her and her staff the opportunity to,

**“see the positives and recognise the good job that we all do”.**

In a time where teaching is arguably the most challenging it has ever been, this positive outlook has brought the students and staff some hope in a very challenging time.

# ITE (Department) Focus

## SCDE Digital Literacies Framework Development Group

Aloyise Mulligan | September 2020

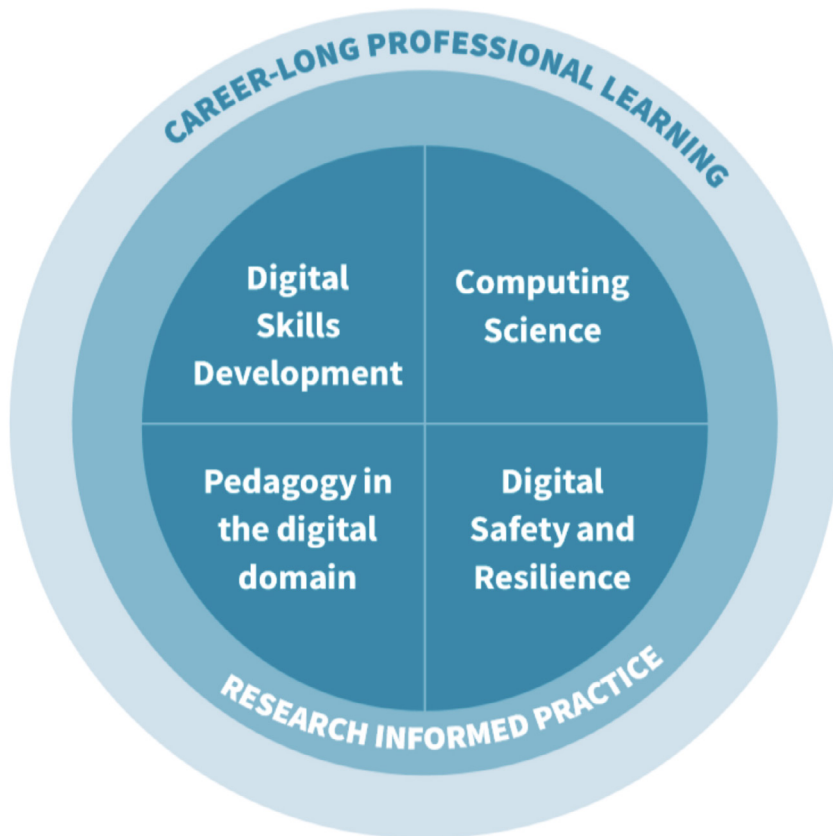
A working group was established several years ago in response to a request by the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE) to review digital literacies in Initial Teacher Education. The objective of the group was to produce a National Framework for Digital Literacies in Initial Teacher Education in line with GTCS Standards for Registration (Scottish Government, 2016, p.3). The group comprised of representatives from all providers of ITE across Scotland.

The aim of this group was to implement Scottish Government's aims and aspirations to:

- develop the necessary skills, behaviours and dispositions of prospective teachers to become effective practitioners with digital tools and spaces
- address the digital literacies expectations of the Standards for Provisional Registration as maintained by the GTCS
- ensure that digital literacies are embedded in the foundation skillsets of early career teachers as they begin teaching

The process of collaboration involved each institution sharing their current practice and reviewing academic papers, best practice and discussing future developments. The group met regularly to form a rationale for the framework and agree the six themes that form the basis of a solid foundation for career-long professional development. The group liaised with SCDE, GTCS and Scottish Government throughout the process.

A core part of this work revolved around the community of learning established by the group and sharing of good practice. The group decided that this should not end with the publication of the framework but continue by prioritising the process of collaboration and ensure the good foundation built by this group was continued in future years.



The impact of the pandemic on schools and universities is significant with a very quick transfer from face to face learning to online platforms. This supported the necessity to ensure future teachers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding to adopt a blended approach to learning and teaching with a sound pedagogical basis.

The framework was developed for senior leaders in ITE, teacher educators, student teachers and student teacher mentors and regents. To ensure the continued implementation and development of digital literacies the group felt it was essential to develop a website as a basis for dissemination of shared practice and source of information and inspiration. An important aspect of this website is the continued collaboration between ITE institutions with contributions welcomed from all stakeholders to ensure a vibrant and relevant space to develop digital literacies across Scotland.

An important aspect of the website is the blog which was developed in response to the prioritisation of continued collaboration and sharing of practice.

The University of Aberdeen have contributed their first entry by detailing the exciting new Virtual Practicum developed for our PGDE and MA1 primary students.

This connects to several strands of the Digital Literacies Framework;

- Strand 1 - Digital Skills development
- Strand 2 - Pedagogy in the digital domain
- Strand 6 - Career long professional learning

Please click below to view the website and I encourage you share any aspect of your practice related to the framework.

**The National Framework for Digital Literacies Website:**

<https://digitalliteracyframework.scot>



# Postgraduate Taught & Professional Learning (Department) Focus

## Introduction

It is exciting to be leading a department which has a long history of supporting professional learning across a wide range of contexts. A key driver for our department is creating supportive, collaborative and flexible learning opportunities for professionals who support others. This is reflected in the department's portfolio which covers a range of professional contexts and subjects within our MEd and MSc pathways:

- Autism and Learning
- Gaelic Medium Education
- Inclusive Practice
- Pastoral Care, Guidance and Support
- Practitioner Enquiry and Action Research
- Teaching Qualification for Further Education
- Leadership
- Mindfulness

Our approach encourages communities of practice focused around collaborative enquiry that stems from participants' identified areas of development so that the professional learning is relevant to the individual practice.

For decades, we have made substantial use of online learning environments to offer a blended learning approach to provide a mix of real-time interactive workshops, collaborative spaces for online groups as well as supported online guided study. Our experienced staff are very well supported through the University of Aberdeen e-learning team and IT services to ensure reliable, safe and always open online learning spaces. We continue to successfully build on our extensive experience so that the professional learning provision remains open to all and is not restricted by the impact of COVID19 as all our postgraduate taught programmes are provided online with support from our highly experienced team. Please do take a look at the School of Education postgraduate taught programme information on our website for further information.

One new addition to our provision is the International Postgraduate Diploma in Education (iPGDE) for teachers in Qatar. This Master's level diploma offers an in-service professional learning and development opportunity that uniquely embeds a teaching qualification accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). The iPGDE creates a further pathway to gaining an MEd whereby on completion of the iPGDE the participants can opt to continue to the full MEd to undertake the Master's project to complete their MEd studies. I am delighted to be teaching on this programme and I know that I, and my colleagues, are looking forward to creating collaborative communities to explore and critique practice in international contexts and if COVID19 does not get in the way, we will also have the privilege of observing participants' teaching in their school contexts in Qatar next year.

On behalf of the Postgraduate Taught and Professional Learning team, I wish you well as the new academic year goes into full swing. We will be thrilled to hear from you if you would like any further information or have ideas around collaborative ways in which we can build on our partnerships to enhance professional learning.

**Professor Yvonne Bain | Interim Head of Postgraduate Taught & Professional Learning**



## Mindful Lockdown

Colette Savage, Graeme Nixon and Ingrid Stanyer

Coronavirus continues to present multiple challenges, during which mindfulness has continued to rise in prominence. Even the University's Employee Wellbeing page has an image of hands on keyboard in meditation pose (or mudra)! When the University closed its doors in mid-March the School of Education's Colette Savage, Graeme Nixon and Ingrid Stanyer provided mindfulness for staff, students and the general public. On the next page we can read about these sessions.

---

# Postgraduate Taught & Professional Learning (Department) Focus

---

## Mindfulness for Students

Ingrid Stanyer and Graeme Nixon ran daily 30-minute mindfulness sessions for undergraduate and graduate students from March up until the end of May. These took place on the MyAberdeen collaborate room. Numbers dipped and rose as the weeks went on but a real sense of community of practice developed. As the sun shone back in the Spring months the group would sit in gardens with their devices, often using the bird song as the soundtrack for practice. Ingrid and Graeme decided to keep it theory light and selected practices that aimed to settle the mind, hoping to quieten the din of the attentional arms race out with and within. The basic protocol was to land in a posture of relaxed attention, then settle through lengthening breath.

Next grounding themselves through feeling into the nature and frontiers of bodily sensation, and then simply noticing, with kindness and curiosity, where the mind would go, before gently escorting it back to the anchoring support of breath, body, sound or movement. As the weeks progressed a rotation of practices emerged. These included Bodyscan, Breath support, Sound support, Safe Place, Mindful movement, Cultivating gratitude, Mindful eating and RAIN.

Great fun was had sharing mindful eating preferences (raisins are the norm, maltesers melt too fast and American hard gums are a no-no!) and movement allowed the group to indulge in some gentle yoga (on one occasion led skilfully by Ingrid's son James).

Out with the practices the group discussed the challenges of lockdown; the fresh uncertainty of the pandemic, and mind diets during this initial period of confinement. Many of the students took up recommendations for online practices and theoretical support, and from a professional perspective research and approaches to introducing mindfulness to children were also shared, perhaps something that will be done increasingly in schools now they are open again.

You can read more about the mindfulness with students sessions at this Blog that Graeme wrote: <https://tceltintr679475724.wordpress.com/2020/05/05/blog-3-gratitude-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-mindfulness-and-transitions/>

---

## Mindfulness for Staff

Colette Savage started the staff sessions shortly after we left the campus in early March and these are still ongoing. The sessions moved to Monday and Friday last month. There are now over 70 recorded sessions in the 'Daily Mindfulness TEAMS' and staff can utilise these for their own practice. These sessions were aimed at a range of mindful practises to deal with emotions, uncertainty and lack of control in the current situation.

Staff feedback has been very positive with a recognition of the level of support these session have provided to deal with the situation we find ourselves in. It drew interest from a wide range of staff including the honorary medical staff who were also working in the ER Covid ward at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, and so sessions were simultaneously recorded in both TEAMS and Collaborate to make them available to the public.

This then led to other hospital staff working in the Covid wards to utilise these sessions along with the general public.

For Colette, it has been both uplifting and humbling to be in a position to join so many colleagues in the university supporting others in so many ways through this challenging time.

---

## Mindfulness for the Public

In April, Ruth Taylor (VP Education) asked Colette Savage to develop a mindfulness provision for the university community and beyond. Colette developed a free online course in Blackboard, which was launched by the university in April 2020 and has now over 1250 students enrolled.

The course is available to anyone, can also be included as a university elective course

and has three modules. These are aimed at key practises for dealing with anxiety and emotions and developing focus skills to manage thinking. The GTCS currently offer it as part of the mental wellbeing provision on their website for teachers.

The link to the free course is: <https://on.abdn.ac.uk/discover/free-mindfulness-course>



# Research Update

## Introduction

The School of Education has a stimulating and vibrant research community dedicated to the improvement of education through critical enquiry, underpinned by values of social and environmental justice, inclusion and diversity. Our staff are engaged in a wide range of local, national and international projects linked to our 4 research themes:

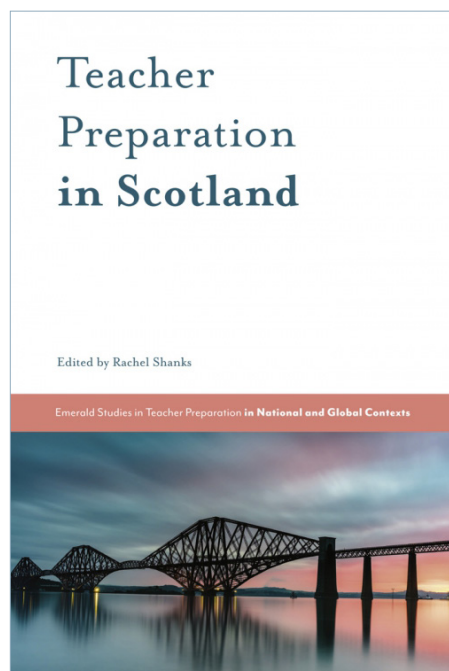
- International Studies in Social and Educational Development
- Lifelong Professional Education & Development
- Educational Inclusion and Wellbeing
- Pedagogy & Digital Learning

We also reach out to the local community, local schools and other partners via our public engagement events and have a strong and diverse publications portfolio. Please read more about our themes, projects, networks and publications by exploring the links on this spread.

Dr Jackie Ravet | Interim Director of Research



## New book 'Teacher Preparation in Scotland' (2020) edited by Dr Rachel Shanks



In September 2020, a new book on teacher education in Scotland, edited by the School of Education's Dr Rachel Shanks, was published. As well as an introduction and chapter on teacher induction by Dr Shanks, the book also includes a chapter from the School's Dr David Johnston, 'School Placement: Problematising Notions of the 'Good' Placement.'

Most of the book's contributors are members of the Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education (MQuITE) project which is a Scottish-Government funded longitudinal study involving all higher education institutions that provide initial teacher education in Scotland.

For more information on the MQuITE project visit:  
<https://mquite.home.blog>

'Teacher Preparation in Scotland' is part of the Emerald Studies in Teacher Preparation in National and Global Contexts. The book charts both the origins and development of teacher preparation in Scotland from 1872 to the present day.

Key milestones in policy and practice are covered, alongside chapters on current pathways into teaching through undergraduate degrees, the one-year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education, Online and Distance Learning and Masters routes. There are individual chapters on Catholic teacher preparation, the Episcopal Teaching Training College, and the preparation of English language teachers. The concluding chapter looks ahead to the future of initial teacher education in Scotland.

The introduction is currently available to download:

<https://books.emeraldinsight.com/resources/pdfs/chapters/9781839094811-TYPE23-NR2.pdf>

### Reviews...

the book 'will be the definitive account of teacher education in Scotland for many years to come.'

Professor Ian Menter  
Emeritus Professor of Teacher Education, University of Oxford

'The book reflects on the central question facing all teacher educators, where should teacher preparation happen, where do student teachers learn best? The book is an important reference work drawing on policy, research and the scholarly literature.'

Professor Christine Forde  
Emeritus, University of Glasgow

---

# Research Update

---

## Professor Pamela Abbott Awarded Grant to Address Governance Crisis in Horn of Africa

Professor Pamela Abbott, School of Education, together with Professors Zeray Yihdego and Tamas Gyoeffi, School of Law, are part of a new international collaboration which aims to address the crisis of governance in the Horn of Africa, a region with a huge socio-economic development potential but suffering from instability and fragile states. The three-year project, which is supported by a £583,349 UK Research and Innovation Training Grant from the Global Challenges Research Fund, will focus on Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan, all of which are among the least developed countries in the world.

The project will investigate the promises and pitfalls of federalism and devolution in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan.

Based on the finding research-informed policy recommendations aimed at addressing the crisis of governance in each country will be made.

The African Research Universities Association (ARUA) Centre of Excellence in Good Governance at Addis Ababa University will lead the project, in partnership with the universities of Aberdeen and Western Cape, South Africa.

The research agenda: *Addressing the Crisis of Governance in the Horn of Africa: A Lack of Inclusive and Strong Institutions and the Failure to Institutionalise Power* - has 2 main objectives: to build capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa for researching governance by training PhD and masters students and junior faculty, and to research the crisis of governance in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Somalia. The Aberdeen team will contribute to both elements of the project, with all 3 academics involved in the co-supervision of 4 PhD students and the teaching of masters students, building their capacity to carry out governance research.

---

## Study into How New Teachers Handled the Switch to Remote Teaching During Lockdown

Dr Rachel Shanks in the School of Education has been awarded four thousand pounds to investigate the impact that the sudden shift to remote teaching during lockdown has had on new teachers.

The research is being funded by the British Educational Research Association as part of its small grants fund for research into the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The project is a collaboration with Dr Mark Carver at the University of Strathclyde and is also part of the wider Scottish Government-funded Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education project. For more information visit: [www.mquite.scot](http://www.mquite.scot)

The aim of the research is to find out what has prepared new teachers in Scotland in their Initial Teacher Education programmes and induction to enable them to handle the unexpected changes in teaching and learning and what professional learning needs they are now highlighting.

Initial responses indicate that new teachers largely felt able to respond to the challenges of teaching during a pandemic. They were more confident in being able to respond to emergency remote teaching than many other aspects of teaching that are considered as standard abilities by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), such as differentiating lessons or assessing pupils.

‘Our research is new, and we believe unique. We will find out how new teachers draw on their experiences from Initial Teacher Education to meet unexpected and unforeseeable challenges. We will be able to inform those involved in teacher education curriculum planning. Our work will also show how teachers see themselves as assuming broader roles within society and their local communities. To be effective initial teacher education needs to be adaptable to rapid change and uncertain futures and this research demonstrates the current situation in Scotland.’

Dr Rachel Shanks, Project Lead

---

## PhD Successes

Congratulations to all of our PhD students who have successfully completed their studies!

### Daniel Wodah

Thesis - Exploring the roles of Indigenous Knowledge in the maintenance and preservation of the Wechiau Community Hippopotamus Sanctuary in Northwest Ghana.

### Aristea Kyriakou

Thesis - The Schoolyard Pyramid: From an Empty Space to an Educational Place.

### Anna Dako

Thesis - Somatic Living - On Somatic Ontologies of Human Nature and Wellbeing and RePairing Human-Nature Condition in Movement.

### Heather Bond

Thesis - Self-Compassion for Adolescents: The Role of Education in Scotland.

# Student Spotlight

## RAYMOND UPHILL-WOOD

### Masters in Education (MEd)

My name is Raymond Uphill-Wood. I graduated in 2008 with a BA (hons) in Fine Art for the prestigious Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design and still work as an artist today.

More recently I have successfully completed my TQFE with the University of Aberdeen. I was nervous at first but the lecturing team and support from the university has been outstanding. The course really opened my mind on learning and I would like to develop more as an educator.

I am now about to continue further study and have joined the Masters in Education Programme. I mean to extend my knowledge and understanding of pedagogy. In turn I hope to inspire a broader spectrum of learners.

I believe that to continue my alternative practice whilst pursuing a master's degree will enhance my contribution both to my own research and as a collaborator with my peers. The opportunity to explore the application of theory to practice as well as to open new pathways and opportunities excites me. I believe a master's degree will afford me a more valuable connection to follow essential professional expertise and challenge my personal development.

I am currently the makeup artistry lecturer at Dundee and Angus College and have been teaching for around 4 years. I was recently awarded 'Lecturer of the Year' from the College which I am extremely proud of. The award is voted for by the students which makes it all the more special.

I'm a person that second guesses and doubts myself, which isn't always a bad thing, but when I create that Eureka moment it just secures my passion for my work and enables my drive and strength to grow. Something that I always tell my students, "trust the process, to make memories and not "learning experiences", because memories will always be remembered, and these, take priority".



## LYNNE ERSKINE

### Master of Arts in Education (MA) Graduate 2020

I'm Lynne, I'm 40, and I'm a probationer in Aberdeenshire Council, having successfully completed the undergraduate MA in Primary Education.

I would have to admit that being a teacher wasn't a lifelong vocation of mine, although I've always had a love of learning. I first became interested in the Curriculum for Excellence when it was implemented in schools, as at that time I had young children in the lower stages of primary. That interest grew as I began to volunteer at school, and I came to realise that whilst teaching is a demanding job, it's also so rewarding, and I explored entry into the profession.

With four children, I felt that the barriers would be too great to return to study. When we relocated from Fife to Aberdeen for my husband's job, I contacted the teaching staff at Aberdeen University, and decided to enrol.

The course was challenging both academically and logistically, but the support I received from the staff, both tutors and support services alike, meant that I was able to successfully navigate the demands of both course work and placements. I was pleased and proud to have been awarded the Kay prize for achieving the highest grade point average in my cohort.

Not only have I now been able to embark upon a career that I once regarded as an impossibility, but I have made lifelong connections and friendships. The course has given me an excellent foundation of both theoretical knowledge and practical skill that have enabled me to enter my probationary year with the confidence to continue to grow as I gain experience in teaching.



# Staff Spotlight

## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT

### STEPH O'REILLY

Prior to joining the school I worked as a secondary history, modern studies and politics teacher, and textbook writer. I am currently the lead social studies tutor for the secondary PGDE programme and also work on social studies courses within the primary programme. I am also studying MEd in Guidance, Pastoral Care and Pupil Support. My main educational interests lie in GIRFEC, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the promotion of health and wellbeing and responsible citizenship in schools.



### PATRYCJA BROMM

I originally joined the University in March 2018 as a Data Coordinator in Health Services Research Unit before moving to HR in March this year to work as an Employment Services Assistant.

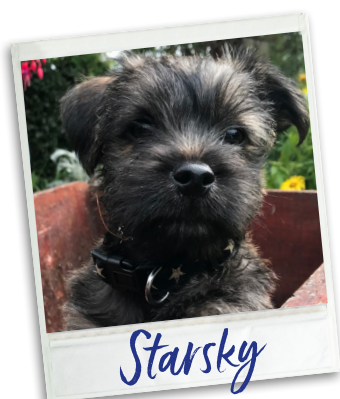
Following the end of my contract I joined the School of Education to become a School Support Assistant working predominantly with MA 1-4 and Online Access courses.

### ALAN GRIEVE

I have worked as a teacher of Business Education for 12 years in Aberdeen city and shire schools. I have also worked for several years at the SQA operating in many roles including as a team leader for N5 Business Management. I will be the Business Education tutor for ITE as well as joining the subject co-ordinator team for PGDE. My professional interests include coaching/mentoring, digital literacy and enterprise in education.



## MEET OUR NEW SOED FOUR LEGGED FRIENDS!



# Staff Spotlight

## DR JOHN MYNOTT Head of Initial Teacher Education

I am John Mynott, and I have recently joined the School of Education as the Head of Initial Teacher Education. For the past ten years I have been a primary school headteacher and I have always had a passion for teacher education. I am looking forward to working with my wonderful colleagues in the School of Education to help prepare future generations of teachers.

I undertook my doctorate while I was a full time headteacher looking at Lesson Study, a collaborative professional learning method. From this work, I have developed a strong interest both in Lesson Study as a method, and in wider professional learning. I am particularly interested in how individuals collaborate, when this goes well and when this does not go as well. Capturing learning is a vital component of any professional learning activity and my current research is looking at how professional learning can be captured, sustained and enhanced.

As I joined the University of Aberdeen during lockdown, my introductions have been conducted virtually. While this was not how I pictured meeting my new colleagues, I would say that throughout each of our virtual meetings, their warmth, passion and enthusiasm has shone out. It has been a lovely welcome, and I am looking forward to meeting them in person.



## INGRID STANYER Lecturer

I went into teaching as a 40th Birthday present to myself having spent the preceding 5 years working within financial services. A part-qualified chartered accountant, following a business degree in 1986, I worked in London and Stockholm translating financial documents from Swedish to English. Three children and seven years of translating later, teaching was calling loud and clear.

My teaching career started in a wonderful Church of England School in Bournemouth where over a third of our pupils had English as a second language, and many pupils had complex emotional and social issues. For me seeing the way pupils thrived within a school where everyone naturally viewed distressed behaviour as a means of communication, where staff wellbeing and spiritual development were prioritised, where outdoor learning was a natural part of the curriculum and where parents were welcomed at the end of every day gave me a benchmark for how I felt a school should be.

The following 12 years I spent in the independent sector at Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen as a teacher in the Junior school and one year teaching Business Management and Accounts (Int2 and Higher) to S3-S6 pupils in the Senior School. Here I also fought passionately for Learning for Sustainability to be considered as a priority beyond the weekly extra-curricular Eco club. It was also during this time that I discovered mindfulness and meditation and the benefits of regular practice. During the last three years of my time there I facilitated weekly staff mindfulness sessions and taught mindfulness to pupils in my classes.

I then moved to become Deputy Head in a Scottish Attainment Challenge school in Northfield and this was one of my life's biggest challenges and steepest learning curves. I realised that I wanted to build on my understanding of mindfulness and deepen my understanding of how to really support parental and teacher wellbeing which I believe are crucial to healthy childhood development.

To this end I took a "sabbatical" during which time I trained with the Mindfulness in Schools Project (PAWSb) and also completed a Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Hypnotherapy in London while working across schools in Aberdeen City delivering the PAWSb programme and running small resilience-building groups with targeted pupils. My most recent post in the City as Acting Deputy Head enabled me to put a lot of my learning into practice and before I left I ensured that staff and pupils were offered a foundation in mindfulness and ran weekly sessions for parents which were a blend of mindfulness and CBHypnotherapy.

Starting at the School of Education, initially on a part-time basis and now as a full-time member of the team, you will find me on the 4th floor. In my spare time I love swimming and walking and own a little mobile coffee trailer!



# Events

Our school community has creatively navigated the effects of Covid - organising socially-distanced team catch-ups, as well as hosting a virtual Macmillan coffee morning which raised £250.00. Wendy Arthur took part in the virtual London Marathon raising an incredible amount for Mental Health Aberdeen.

Some of our team catching up socially over the summer months. Although we may not be in the office it is nice to still be able to meet up for a chat and a coffee!



Wendy Arthur, School Support Administrator, has trained tirelessly to run the London Marathon 2020. Due to current circumstances she completed the 26.2 miles in and around Aberdeen. We are extremely proud of this amazing achievement and the amount she raised for Mha.



At our Coffee Morning, you helped raise an incredible

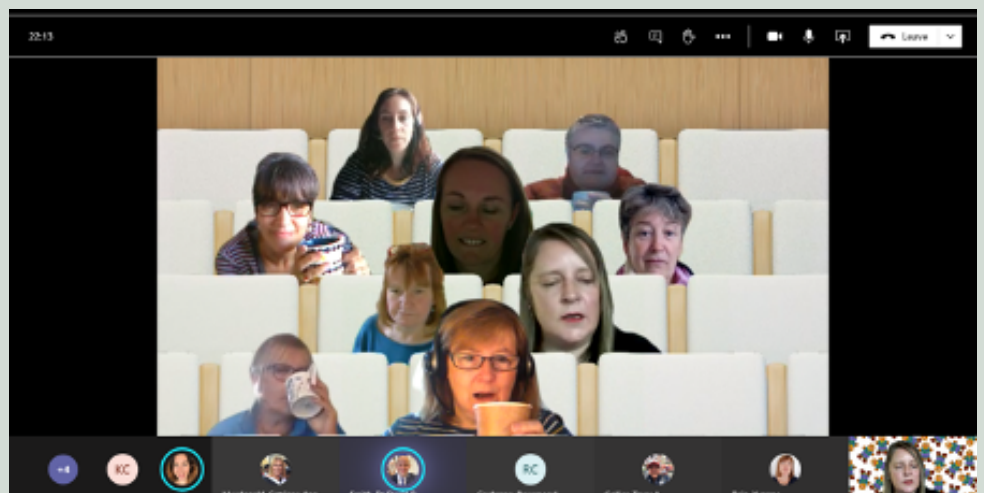
£ **250.00**



Can't make it? Scan the QR code with your phone to make a donation now.

Together, our cakes and coffees mean that Macmillan are able to be there to help people living with cancer.

WORLD'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT





# Research Presentations & Publications

## Presentations

**ALOYISE MULLIGAN, KATRINA FOY,  
DAVID JOHNSTON & RACHEL SHANKS**

**3 - 5 July 2020** 1st Internet Conference, Media Pedagogy Research Group, University of the Aegean. 'The response of schools in Scotland to coronavirus: 'GLOW'ing together'

**RACHEL SHANKS**

**3 - 5 September 2020** Educational Studies Association of Ireland Annual Conference. 'Dressing to impress: A Foucauldian analysis of secondary school uniform policies.'

**23 September 2020** NVivo Virtual Conference, Qualitative Research in a Changing World. 'Using NVivo for Authentic Undergraduate Research Experiences'

**DR ARCHIE GRAHAM, DR PETER MTIKA,  
LINDSAY MACFARLANE, DR DEAN  
ROBSON, DR KEVIN STELFOX**

**29 September 2020** Promoting Equity Week, hosted by the Northern Alliance (RIC) and Education Scotland's Regional Improvement Team (RIT). (Online event). 'Exploring Probationer Teachers' Enactment of Inclusive Pedagogy in Schools Located in High Poverty Environments'

**NEIL MCLENNAN**

**October 2020** The role of history in peacebuilding and development in East Asia (ASEAN Conference of NGOs on History and Peace), Seoul Olympic Parktel, South Korea (access online due to COVID)

**June 2020 (Chair)** Leadership, life and the settled will of the Scottish people. Former First Minister, the Rt Hon. Henry McLeish in conversation with Neil McLennan, University of Aberdeen MayFestival PodFest 2020. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfestival/events/15833/>

**NEIL MCLENNAN (cont.)**

**June 2020 (Invited speaker and delegate)** The Role of History in peacebuilding and development in East Asia, Vietnam National University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, Vietnam. (due to COVID moved to sequence of online sessions)

**June 2020 (Chair)** St Valery History Panel for Royal British Legion, Poppy Scotland and Royal Caledonian Education Trust. Guest:- Brigadier Charles Grant, Prof. Saul David, Dr Stewart Hepburn and John Low. <https://youtu.be/GnFcKjxga6E>

**April 2020 (Invited speaker)** Leadership modelling for a cooperative, sustainable and peaceful future (ASEAN NGOs forum), hosted from South Korea Secretary-general & Steering Committee Chair, History NGO Forum for Peace in East Asia, Seoul, Korea

## Publications

**Abbot, P., Mugisha, R., Mtika, P.** Wenceslas Nzabalarwa (2020). Failing Adult Learners: Why Rwanda's Adult Literacy Education is Not Delivering. *International Journal of Educational Development*. DOI: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059320304478>

Alebeikan, R., **Bain, Y.** & **Cornelius, S.** (2020). 'Experience of doctoral supervision in cross cultural contexts', *Teaching in Higher Education*. DOI: <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/2KEF4PZNAYGRXPWUFYHI/full?target=10.1080/13562517.2020.1767057>

Ansley, G., **Black, P.**, Bröske, B. & Lee, S. (June 2020). 'Showing the way, or getting in the way? Discussing power, influence and intervention in contemporary musical social practices' *International Journal of Community Music*, Volume 13, Number 2, 1 June 2020, pp. 135-155 (21). DOI: [https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/ijcm/pre-prints/content-intellect\\_ijcm\\_00016](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/ijcm/pre-prints/content-intellect_ijcm_00016)

**Gray, D** & Sosu, E.M. (2020). 'Renaturing Science: The Role of Childhoodnature in Science for the Anthropocene'. in A Cutter-MacKenzie, K Malone & E Barratt Hacking (eds), *Research Handbook on Childhoodnature: Assemblages of Childhood and Nature Research*. 1 edn, Springer International Handbooks of Education, Springer, Switzerland, pp. 557-585. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67286-1\\_38](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67286-1_38)

Von Brömssen, K., Ivkovits, H. & **Nixon, G.** (2020) Religious literacy in the curriculum in compulsory education in Austria, Scotland and Sweden - a three-country policy comparison, *Journal of Beliefs & Values*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2020.1737909>

**Nixon, G.** (2020). Blog on International Network of Transitions Researchers. <https://tceltintr679475724.wordpress.com/2020/05/05/blog-3-gratitude-in-the-time-of-coronavirus-mindfulness-and-transitions>

Bjerkholt, E., Attard Tonna, M., Krøjgaard, F., Paaske, K.A., **Robson, D** & **Shanks, R.** (2020). 'A comparative study of mentoring for new teachers', *Professional Development in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2020.1744684>

Nyatsikor, M.K., Sosu, E., **Mtika, P.** & **Robson, D.** (2020). 'Teacher characteristics and children's educational attainment in Ghana: do some teacher characteristics matter more for children attending disadvantaged schools?', *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 5, 162. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feeduc.2020.00162>



[www.abdn.ac.uk/education](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/education)

School of Education, University of Aberdeen,  
MacRobert Building, King's College,  
Aberdeen, Scotland AB24 5UA