



Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter

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Queen's University named as one of the UK's first Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Education (ACE-CSE)

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) – a part of GCHQ – awarded the University silver recognition from its ACE-CSE programme after Queen's demonstrated that it is delivering first-rate cyber security education on campus and promoting cyber skills in its community.

Since its foundation in 2009, the Centre for Secure Information Technologies (CSIT) at Queen's has developed a strong national and international reputation for cyber security research and collaboration.

Northern Ireland has an ambitious target of growing the number of cyber security professionals in the region to 5,000 by 2030 and it's hoped the award will support the University's efforts in continuing to build a strong pipeline of highly skilled graduates.

"I welcome this recognition of Queen's by the NCSC as one of the first Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Education highlighting our commitment to rolling out cyber security awareness and knowledge across all education pathways, operational areas of the institution and the wider community. I congratulate the ACE-CSE team led by Dr Sandra Scott-Hayward, which has secured this recognition."

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

Research with Impact:

First COVID-19 vaccine trial in Northern Ireland finds new vaccine to be highly effective

People in Northern Ireland have played a key role in the development of a new COVID-19 vaccine, Novavax, as part of a UK-wide trial.

Nearly 500 participants were recruited from Northern Ireland for the trial which was led by researchers Professor Danny McAuley, Professor Judy Bradley and Dr Johnny Stewart from Queen's University Belfast and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The new vaccine has been shown to be 89.3% effective in a large-scale UK trial which is the largest double-blind, placebo-controlled COVID-19 vaccine trial to be undertaken in the UK so far.

"Undertaking carefully conducted trials to make sure we have safe and effective vaccines is a critical part of controlling and adapting to this pandemic. This study is a further key milestone in the roadmap to restoring the health and wellbeing of society."

Professor Stuart Elborn, Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor for Medicine, Health and Life Sciences,
Queen's University Belfast

Research reveals devastating impact of COVID-19 on the diagnosis of oesophageal and stomach cancer

Research by Queen's and the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry has highlighted the impact of the pandemic on diagnoses of cancer of the oesophagus and stomach, in addition to Barrett's oesophagus, a condition that can lead to oesophageal cancer.

When lockdown restrictions began in March 2020, key cancer services, including diagnostic endoscopy services, were severely impacted as resources across the UK were diverted towards the pandemic response. Surveillance for patients with Barrett's oesophagus, which in a small fraction of cases can progress to oesophageal cancer, was also suspended.

The research found that diagnoses of oesophageal and stomach cancer fell by 26.6%; meaning that 53 fewer patients than expected were diagnosed during the first six months of the pandemic. For Barrett's oesophagus diagnoses fell by 59.3% which represents 236 fewer Barrett's cases than expected.



Education with Social Purpose: Volunteer SU enhancing impact through 'Jump In'

Following the success of their Inspiring Leaders programme – one of the original Social Charter Signature Projects – Volunteer SU have developed a new programme, 'Jump IN', designed to support Queen's students at every stage of their volunteering journey.

Jump IN is an all-encompassing programme, which supports at every stage of the volunteering journey. Volunteer SU are bringing forward the series of interactive online training sessions around the topic of leadership between 9 February and 10 March.



Sustainability: The Protocol and the Environment

A month since the end of the Brexit transition period, this workshop brings together practitioners and academics to discuss the impact of the Protocol and the new UK-EU agreement on the environment.

New rules govern relationships between and within these islands: the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland (part of the Withdrawal Agreement) and the brand new Trade and Cooperation Agreement (signed in December). What do these new legal frameworks mean for the environment in Northern Ireland, for cross-border and all/island environmental issues across the island of Ireland, and for UK-wide response to environmental challenges?

This online workshop is open to all participants interested in environmental governance, in the impact of Brexit on UK-Irish relations and UK intergovernmental relations. It brings together specialists of the new UK-EU relationship, as well as environmental policy and governance experts.

Register [HERE](#)

Breaking Boundaries to Produce New Knowledge: Queen's awarded funding to investigate PTSD responses to armed conflict in Colombia

Academics at Queen's University have been awarded funding of over £400,000 to lead research into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) responses to armed conflict in Colombia.

The three-year project, a collaboration between Queen's and the University of Los Andes in Bogota, is aimed to help prevent and effectively treat mental health disorders in Colombia and other countries which have experienced conflict.

Professor Cherie Armour, Director of the Stress, Trauma and Related Conditions (STARC) research lab at Queen's University, Dr Donncha Hanna from the School of Psychology and Professor Gary Hardiman from the School of Biological Sciences, will work with academics in Colombia, a country which has a very high rate of people diagnosed with mental health problems.

"Through our interdisciplinary approach we will collect biological, social, and psychological data and will start to see what factors influence both risk and resilience for the development of PTSD in those who have been exposed to armed conflict and experienced a multitude of atrocities. The findings will also support the Colombian government, and potentially those in other countries which have experienced armed conflict, in their efforts to develop robust and evidence-based strategies for the prevention of and comprehensive care for mental health disorders."

Professor Cherie Armour, Director of the Stress, Trauma and Related Conditions (STARC),
Queen's University Belfast

New Queen's scholarship opportunities will explore impact of AI on science and society

Thirty funded doctoral scholarships announced by Queen's University Belfast are set to provide a unique opportunity to explore the challenges of Artificial intelligence (AI) for every area of science and society.

The researchers who secure places on the programme will work at the cutting edge of AI algorithms while considering the societal implications of allowing machines to make decisions about our futures.

Queen's has been awarded a Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarship grant of £1.35m over six years for the Leverhulme Interdisciplinary Network on Algorithmic Solutions (LINAS) Doctoral Training Programme (DTP) to fund 15 doctoral scholarships and has matched the funding to sponsor another 15 positions over the next three years.

The interdisciplinary research programme will be supervised by academic experts from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences.

Civic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue:

Queen's hosts series of talks to mark 100th anniversary of the Partition of Ireland

A series of public talks organised by Queen's University Belfast, entitled "The Partition of Ireland: Causes and Consequences" will take place during 2021 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Partition of Ireland.

The series is supported by the UK and Irish governments, and by the Royal Irish Academy and the British Academy.

In each online talk a leading academic will address a major theme. Subjects covered in the series include the complex origins and legacies of partition, the experience of minorities, the Irish border in literature, the global dynamics of Irish partition, and class-based and gender-based dimensions.

The talks reflect expert analysis from a variety of perspectives, reflecting the inclusive approach adopted toward the marking of this important anniversary.

"Queen's is delighted to lead this collaborative initiative to mark the 100th anniversary of the Partition of Ireland. This is an important milestone in Irish history and this informative series of talks will allow for open and transparent debate on this historic event which will be accessible online."

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

Queen's research finds that 'church is something other than a building' during the Covid-19 pandemic

A new research study sheds light on how churches on the island of Ireland are navigating the Covid-19 pandemic including changes in pastoral care, moving religion online, social services and the wider community, and stress and ministry.

The research was led by Queen's University Belfast and the Irish Council of Churches/ Irish Inter Church Meeting.

One of the key findings from the research was the perceptions of what church is and what it does may be starting to shift in response to the pandemic.

During most of the pandemic church buildings across the island have been closed for worship due to restrictions on public gatherings. When churches have been open, strict social distancing protocols have limited the numbers who can attend in person.

Equality and Excellence:

Effective framing can improve support for gender equality initiatives

A Queen's University Belfast study looking at how to reduce negative attitudes towards gender initiatives in STEM has found that they receive better support when their impact is effectively communicated.

The research, which has recently been published in international scientific journal BioScience, shows that promoting the initiatives in terms of the intrinsic value of the work and benefits for individuals when asking academics to take part is key to improving engagement with these initiatives so that they are not seen as merely 'box-ticking' exercises.

The paper entitled When You Put It that Way: Framing Gender Equality Initiatives to Improve Engagement among STEM Academics was written by an interdisciplinary team of academics from the Engineering and Physical Science faculty at Queen's and is the first publication from the Queen's 'Inclusion Really Does Matter' project led by Dr Ioana Latu.

The project was set up in 2019, funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, to accelerate progress towards gender equality.

"Our research shows that the focus, leadership and engagement motivation of these initiatives are particularly important factors to consider when framing a gender equality initiative for STEM academics. For example, pressurised framing of gender equality initiatives should be reduced, instead promoting the intrinsic value of diversity for workplaces, scientific endeavours, and individuals themselves."

Dr Lynn Farrell, Lead Author, Queen's University Belfast

Skills for female newcomer students programme launched

A 12-week programme of GCSE exam tuition with 4 weeks of employability training has been offered to a group of twelve female migrant and newcomer students.

The online GCSE Maths and English workshops are being delivered weekly by Studyseed CIC, a non-profit educational support service supported by the Research Support of the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics (HAPP). Tailored support will be offered to students who may find studying in English difficult to understand and require additional support to increase their ability to envisage their independent contribution to Northern Ireland society.

After Easter, the students will be offered a weekly employability skills workshop where they will create their own CV, practice interview techniques, learn how to find job vacancies and understand the different ways of gaining work experience.

The courses complement the one-year 'Welcoming Communities' project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, based in the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics (HAPP)

Recognising and Rewarding Contributions from Staff and Students: Queen's students come top at UK-wide Model NATO

Students from the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics have come top in the annual UK-wide Model NATO competition held remotely this year.

Model NATO 2021 was a simulated response to a natural disaster impacting NATO allies in the Mediterranean. Discussions were chaired by professional diplomats, with diplomats, armed forces personnel and academics advising teams throughout the simulation.

The competition was sponsored by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, NATO's Public Diplomacy Section and the British International Studies Association.

The final year Queen's students represented Slovakia and the UK and were coached by Professor Alister Miskimmon, Head of the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics. The team included Sunniva Henden and Joe Reilly representing the UK, and Bebhinn Tankard and Matthew Dumigan representing Slovakia.

The UK team received the Outstanding Delegation Award (first place). The event featured addresses from the UK Deputy Head of Mission at NATO, as well as from the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy which gave the students further insight into the practice of diplomacy.

