



Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter

March 2021. VOL 21

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Queen's hosts Prime Minister; COVID-19 research continues; UK-Ireland research collaborations; Geography at Work; Queen's academics secure significant research funding; Extinction risk of smaller amphibians discovery; "Livestock Lockdown"; The Charter Podcast Ep. 8; Green Gown Award Winners and the Lanyon Building Conservation Project is commended.

Queen's hosts PM Boris Johnson to discuss the University's contribution to the fight against COVID

Queen's University hosted a visit by Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine on 12 March 2021.

The Prime Minister visited one of the University's laboratories to see first-hand the work that the University is doing to help in the fight against coronavirus where he met a number of researchers working on these vital projects.

During the visit, the Prime Minister met with Professor Greer, Professor Elborn, and Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, to discuss the University's response to the pandemic.



Research with Impact:

UK-wide study highlights impacts of the Covid pandemic on the health and social care workforce

The second phase of a UK-wide study explores the impact of providing health and social care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study has revealed a workforce under pressure with many staff feeling overwhelmed; dealing with increased hours of overtime and reporting lower levels of mental wellbeing. The project team has developed 15 good practice recommendations at individual, organisational and policy level to support the health and social care workforce.

Open to social care workers, social workers, allied health professionals, nurses and midwives, the survey received 3,499 responses from across the UK.

The COVID-19 Health and Social Care Workforce Study is a three-phase study led by Ulster University in partnership with researchers from Queen's University Belfast, Bath Spa University, King's College London and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland.

Queen's part of twenty new UK-Ireland research collaborations in the social sciences

The Irish Research Council (IRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) – part of UK Research and Innovation – have announced support for 20 new collaborations between UK-Ireland based researchers.

The innovative networking collaborations across the social sciences will range in aim from mental health, sexuality and gender studies, children's welfare, and public health to data protection.

Academic researchers at Queen's University Belfast are involved in three of the 20 projects announced.

The networking activities supported by these grants will foster the development of long-term relationships between British and Irish social science researchers, through forming new and strengthening existing relationships and enhancing the overall level of connection between the UK and Irish social science communities.

This collaborative funding programme aims to provide support for social science networking activities, with the broad objective of fostering excellent synergies between these two research communities.

"I am delighted that these leading academics in the social sciences have been awarded grants for their research which will benefit both North-South and East-West collaboration, and most importantly, make a difference to our society. An integrated approach has never been greater as we harness the considerable strengths in our universities to support economic recovery and future growth as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and post-Brexit."

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



Education with Social Purpose: 'Geography at Work' Presentations

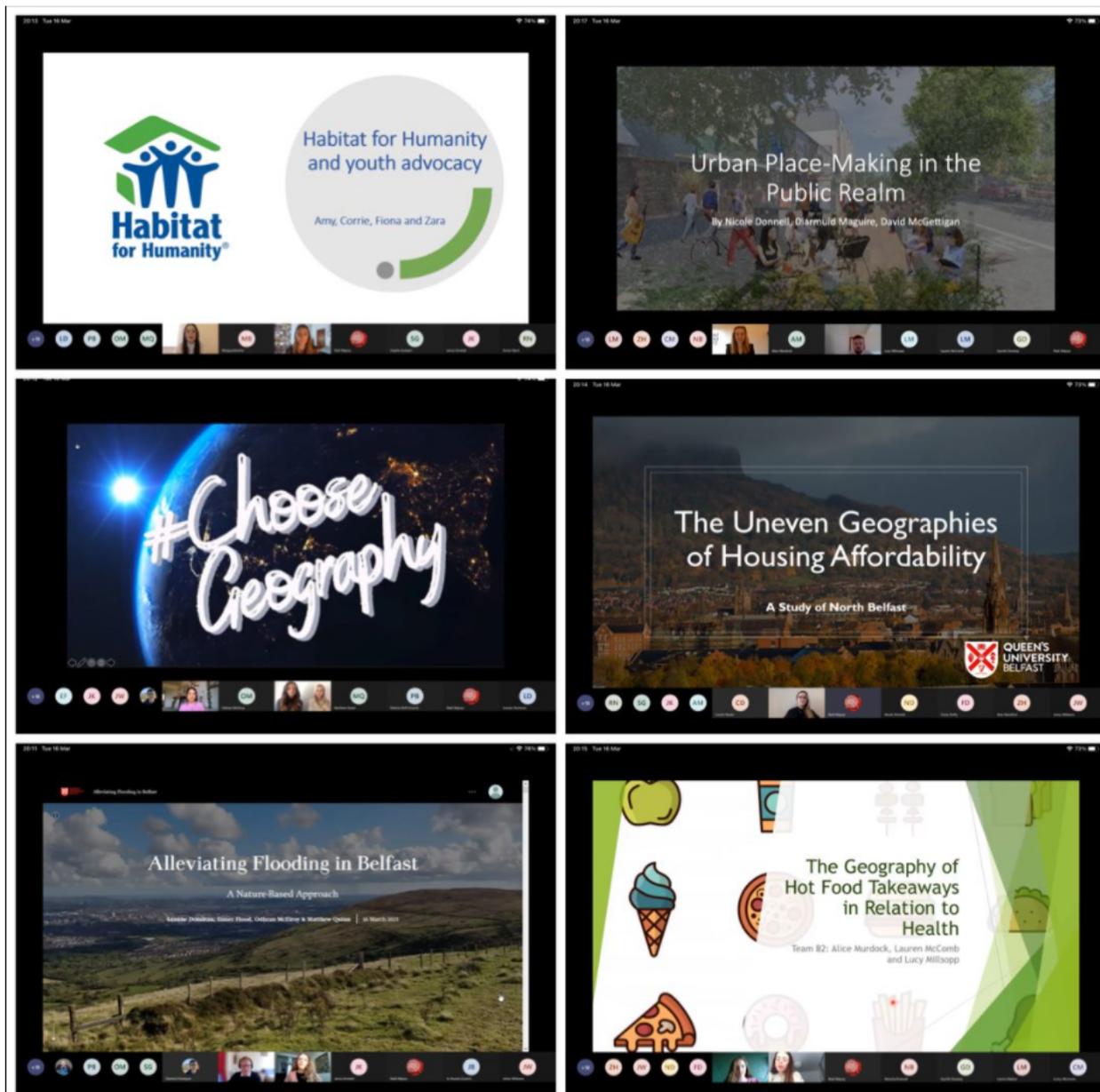
This year's students participating in the 'Geography at Work' module delivered a fantastic set of assessed presentations at a project showcase event on 16 March 2021.

'Geography at Work' enables students to participate in a supervised research project on a topic that interests them, in conjunction with an employer. The module provides significant learning and employability enhancement opportunities, as well as enabling the students to address challenging societal issues.

Research undertaken by the student teams this year examined issues such as Flood Alleviation Measures; Housing Affordability; Mapping Urban Regeneration; Hot Food Takeaway and Adolescent Health and Career Profiles Social Media Campaign.

The event, normally hosted on campus, took place virtually in the presence of partners Belfast City Council, Belfast Hills Partnership, Forward South Partnership, Habitat for Humanity, and the Royal Geographical Society.

For more information, click on the image below.

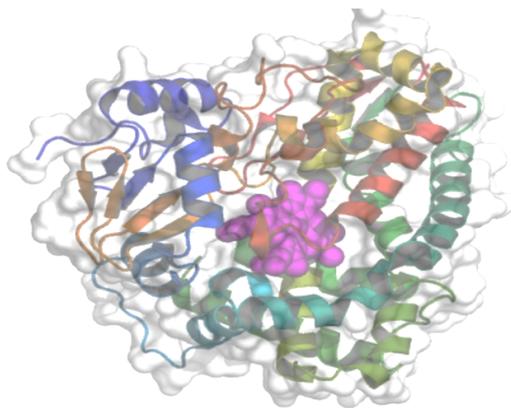


Breaking Boundaries to Produce New Knowledge: Queen's scientists awarded significant funding to develop the enzymes of tomorrow

A collaboration between researchers at Queen's University and industry experts, Almac Sciences, a member of the Almac Group, has been supported by more than £2 million of funding to accelerate a programme of biocatalyst research and development.

This investment, awarded by Invest Northern Ireland (INI) and supported by the European Regional Development Fund, will further develop a cutting-edge biotechnology platform for biocatalyst discovery.

The new programme will establish 'IN Silico Informed metaGenomic Harvesting Technology' (INSIGHT™), a unique platform which brings together computational chemistry, gene mining, cloning and screening methodologies for the production of novel, 'green' biocatalysts. The research aims to improve the enzyme discovery process to allow more robust enzymes to supersede multi-step chemical routes currently used to produce pharmaceutical intermediates and products.



Queen's academics awarded over £1m to tackle software engineering research challenges

Two researchers from the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences at Queen's University Belfast have been awarded prestigious fellowships from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) worth a total of £1.1m.

The research software engineering fellowships will support cutting edge work at the University in areas including cyber security and to help develop tools and expertise to allow more effective use of Atomic, Molecular and Optical (AMO) physics software across a range of applications to benefit society.

Just nine UKRI funded Research Software Engineering Fellowships were available across the UK to drive the development of high-quality research software to tackle important research challenges.

The recipients of the fellowships at Queen's are Dr Domhnall Carlin, from the School of Electronics Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Dr Andrew Brown, from the School of Mathematics and Physics.

Sustainability:

Research shows smaller amphibians have increased extinction risk given their fewer babies

Research led by Queen's University Belfast has found that the risk of extinction among amphibians – the most endangered animals on the planet – increases for species of smaller body size as their females produce fewer babies per birth.

Biologists have long believed that animals of larger body size are more vulnerable to extinction – an idea supported by the widespread endangerment faced by iconic large-sized animals such as rhinos or whales. This study is the first to suggest resetting the theory to focus on reproduction levels of animals rather than on body size when calculating extinction risk.

The accelerating extinctions of biodiversity worldwide are widely regarded as one of the most pressing challenges faced by humanity. Therefore, understanding the factors that drive extinctions has consolidated as a top priority for scientists in the era of climate change.



Dairy cows with no access to outside pasture may have damaged emotional wellbeing

Over the past year, we have been shown the psychological damage that lockdown can have on human wellbeing. New research led by Queen's University Belfast has found that “livestock lockdown” may also damage emotional wellbeing in dairy cows.

In humans, negative moods are linked to pessimistic judgements about ambiguous stimuli, e.g., depression and anxiety sufferers tend to expect fewer positive outcomes in life. By contrast, happy emotions and moods are linked to more optimistic judgements.

This study is the first of its kind to investigate whether dairy cows also have this judgement bias, and whether optimistic judgements can be used as an indicator of psychological wellbeing, which is important for animal welfare.

Equality and Excellence:

Queen's explores impact of pandemic on families caring for members with severe learning difficulties

The current COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone's lives. Research has found the pandemic is having an acute impact on those with care and support needs and has been particularly challenging for families with a loved one with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

Researchers from Queen's have been awarded a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation, to research the impact of the COVID pandemic on families caring for loved ones with severe learning difficulties.

The research will explore the experiences of families across the UK and Ireland to understand the challenges they have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to making recommendations about service provision and to create a co-designed support programme with family members with a loved one with severe learning disabilities, academics in the fields of learning disabilities, disability and psychology and partners from the independent sector who provide care and support for families.

"This research is an important opportunity to work with partners across the UK and Ireland to highlight the concerns of this group and will help to ensure that families of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their experiences during this pandemic are heard and supports developed for the future."

Dr Mark Linden, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast

Civic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue:

The Charter Podcast - 'Syrian academics and academia: Interactions through Cara'

In this, the eighth episode in The Charter Podcast series, Dr Dina Zoe Belluigi of Queen's University Belfast, and Dr Fateh Shaban of the Academic Centre for Development and Peace Studies, in Turkey discuss the work of the Council for At Risk Academics (Cara) and a potential project in Northern Syria.

Dr Shaban, originally from Syria, has been unable to return to the country since the outbreak of the war there. Now based in Turkey, he has been liaising with the Cara Syria programme for several years, and along with other Syrian colleagues set up the Academic Centre for Development and Peace Studies (ACDP) in Turkey.

It is ten years since the beginning of unrest in Syria, when on the 15 March 2011, demonstrations first began.

To listen to the podcast click **HERE**

Recognising and Rewarding Contributions from Staff and Students: Queen's University - Green Gown Award Winners!

The Green Gown Awards UK and Ireland, in association with UKRI, provide the sector with benchmarks for sustainability excellent and are respected by Governments, funding councils, senior management, academics and students.

This year we are delighted to announce that Queen's University students have been announced as winners of the Student Engagement Category for the 'Nurture and Grow Programme'!

A true team effort, the 'Nurture and Grow Programme' encompasses several projects across the Queen's Community including the Elms Allotment, Lennoxvale Tree Nursery, Medicinal Garden, Alleyway Transformation Project, DKB Orchard and Bio: Diverse City.

As winners in the national Student Engagement category, the 'Nurture and Grow Programme' will now be put forward to the international awards.



Lanyon Building Conservation Project - Awards Winners!

We're delighted to announce that the Lanyon Building Conservation project won in the 'Repair and Restoration' category at the 2020 Stone Federation Natural Stone Awards.

This prestigious accolade is testament to the skill and dedication of everyone involved in the project, including the University's Estates team.

The judges remarked that the conservation of the Lanyon's stonework 'emulated the vision and intentions of its originator Sir Charles Lanyon, whilst also recognising and accepting the patina of age', and was a 'well-informed exemplary project using expert craftsmanship'.

The Lanyon project took the award ahead of a number of illustrious and successful repair and restoration schemes from across the UK.