

# DEPARTMENT OF LAW NEWSLETTER

December 2020

## Brilliant and Friendly

*Paul Allen, the Head of Law at Staffordshire University, reflects on the way staff and students have risen to the challenge of a very unusual year.*



Whilst the main theme for 2020 will be Covid 19 related, I wanted to reflect on the massive challenge that the Law team has risen to as we approach Christmas.

I will try not to use the word 'unprecedented' but recognise this has been a year like no other.

Up to the end of February everything was going like clockwork ... I remember speaking to some students in the LRV after the last LPC exam in March (carried out under covid-compliant conditions) and reassuring them that it would only be a matter of time before the current restrictions would start to ease. Things continued to change weekly, daily and sometimes hourly and adapting to this changing landscape has been the only way to survive.

If you consider the move to online delivery, moving into the kitchen, the bedroom, the garden shed, home-schooling, blended learning, blended working and all the regulatory and legal education changes already underway, it describes a period characterised by uncertainty and challenge like no other.

### 'Our students continue to be a credit to the Department and the University'

The Law team grew with the addition of new staff members all recruited and introduced by virtual means. Abdullah, John and Samantha have all managed to integrate quickly and add welcome new perspectives on the way we operate.

We are working hard to refresh our LLB provision so that it is fit for the future and the necessary work is well underway and on track, thanks to everyone in the team's contribution.

We have had notable successes this year and, following in Anna's Brilliant and Friendly footsteps last year, Kath, Diane and Sallyann were all well-deserved winners at the Celebrating Staff Success annual cross-university event.

'Law? Brilliant and Friendly? Best newcomer? and Wellbeing awards?- surely not!'

It is more evidence, if evidence were needed, of the brilliant team of hardworking staff and demonstrates how we continue to put the department firmly on the map.

Our students, too, have risen to the challenges this year has brought, adapting themselves to, and engaging so well with, the new blended learning approach - they continue to be a credit to the Department and the University.

As we head for the Christmas break please remember to log off on Friday and try not to forget your password when you log back on Monday 4th January.

Thanks to everyone in the Law team for your amazing contributions this year, please do have a good break and enjoy the festive season.

So goodbye 2020 and bring on 2021.

Merry Christmas



Paul

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## From South Africa to Staffs

**Law PhD student, Elodie Fellows, tells of how she came to Staffordshire University**

I joined Staffordshire University in 2019 when I enrolled for my MPhil/PhD. I have recently completed my Early Progress

Review successfully and made the shift from MPhil to PhD.

My thesis investigates the requirements for statehood in international law, the concept of sovereignty in constitutional law and international relations to determine the effects of Official Development Assistance on the requirements for statehood. With regards to my supervision, I have Dr John McGarry and Dr Samantha Spence on my team.

I've found that, the school of Law, Policing and Forensics consists of a greatly supportive community of academics who are always available to offer career advice and academic insights.

The journey that led me to Staffs started in South Africa. I completed my BA degree in 2013, in which I majored in political science, and my LLB degree in 2016. I proceeded to gain practical experience and gained right of appearance in the lower courts in South Africa, working primarily in commercial litigation matters and later appearing in children's court. I had also started to lecture law where my passion for public law was rekindled.

Given my experiences, I came to the realisation that I wanted to grow as an academic and that the LLM I had enrolled for previously simply would not do.

Together with my family, I moved to the United Kingdom at the end of 2018, when the opportunity was ripe to take my life in a whole new direction.

When it came to selecting a direction of study in my PhD, I knew that International law has always been something that moved me. I was raised in a country where I saw the effect of breaches of international law long after the events took place and economic sanctions were lifted. Yet, as a state, South Africa cannot recover socially or economically without the assistance of other states. I wanted to know more about the government's responsibility in the state, understand different contexts and engage in broader research in this area.

I often think of Supreme Court Justice Robert H Jackson who, at the Nuremburg trials, said that 'it is not the function of government to keep the citizens from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the government from falling into error'.

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- US Supreme Court Justice  
Robert H Jackson

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## Staffordshire Law Degree—Sri Lankan Style

*Law students at Staffordshire University are truly part of an international law community. Gamindu Hemachandra, the Chief Academic Officer of the Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) tells us of the work the University and APIIT are doing educating Sri Lanka's future lawyers.*

The Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT), Sri Lanka was incorporated in September 1999 in partnership with APIIT Education Group in Malaysia with the objective of increasing access to internationally recognised higher education qualifications for Sri Lankan students.

APIIT Sri Lanka has a longstanding partnership with Staffordshire University. Starting with the quality assurance of APIIT Diploma programmes in 2000, over the years, Staffordshire University has validated several Computing, Business and Law awards for delivery at APIIT Sri Lanka.

Presently, with a population of over 1,000 students and an annual intake of over 450 students, APIIT Sri Lanka is the largest provider of foreign degrees in Sri Lanka. APIIT Sri Lanka has trained over 3,500 Staffordshire University graduates in the disciplines of Business, Computing and Law; we have a track record of producing highly employable graduates with over 95% of our students securing gainful employment within 3 months of graduation.

In 2018, APIIT Sri Lanka established a branch operation in Kandy, the capital city in the Central Province of Sri Lanka. Through this initiative, APIIT Sri Lanka takes its unique brand of industry oriented, student centric and technology empowered higher education provision beyond the boundaries of Colombo.

The Staffordshire University – APIIT partnership was featured as a model for Transnational Education (TNE) in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Country Report for Sri Lanka in 2020; a fitting tribute to 20 years of shared vision and collaboration in higher education.



**Sri Lanka's Future Lawyers—courtesy of APIIT and Staffordshire University**



## *The Sea, The Sea*

**Not one to rest on his laurels, Staffs law alumnus, master mariner and maritime lawyer, Andy Shannon, now wishes to do a PhD**



I am what is considered a mature student. I never intended to become a solicitor, in fact I only got into it because I was annoyed that others in the law firm I was working in, knew more than me and so I bet them I could become a qualified solicitor! Let me explain.

I started off in the Royal Navy (Royal Fleet Auxiliary) when I was just 16! Back in those days you were allowed to join at that age. In fact, I was in my first war zone and got my first medal before I was even 18. Funnily, I never wanted to join the Navy either, I only did it because my brother joined the Air Force and as little brothers do, I wanted to do the complete opposite of him.

I was not at the time studious and didn't leave school with fantastic grades. But what I lacked in natural ability, I made up for in determination. I stuck at it and became a qualified deck officer. I spent 11 years in the Navy, after which I decided that I would try cruise ships. I worked for 5 years on these, gaining my master mariner licence, which is essentially a licence to be a captain of any vessel of any size in the world.

I left the sea for the corporate world, and became an internal auditor for a large cruise line company. I did this for a few years until a maritime law firm offered me a job as one of their accident investigators. Essentially, working for a law firm and investigating maritime accidents such as collisions, grounding, fires etc. I was lucky enough to investigate some of the largest maritime accidents and gained a lot of experience. This is where my legal story begins.

I would investigate the accidents and then hand the case over to a maritime lawyer to run. I wasn't happy that I knew less than the maritime lawyers so I decided to do something about it, by starting my GDL (Graduate Diploma in Law). I thought that the GDL would give me some exposure to the law, but I did it without the intention of becoming a solicitor. I started my GDL, thinking that it would be a breeze. Within the first 2 weeks I realised that I had undertaken a monumental task that would require all the determination that I had back in the seafaring days. I passed the GDL with distinction and felt that it was a shame to stop there. I topped up the GDL to an LLB and went on to do my LPC (Legal Practice Course) with Staffordshire University. I passed the LPC with distinction and then had to work out what I would do about my training contract.

I was advised by the SRA (Solicitors Regulation Authority) to apply for the "equivalent means", meaning that I didn't need to do a training contract, and that all the time I had been working in a law firm could be counted towards a training contract. However, the process involved in evidencing my time spent in a law firm in lieu of a training contract was (justifiably) very thorough, taking around 6 months to complete. The SRA were extremely helpful during this process and I would encourage paralegals to consider this approach if they cannot get a training contract of their own. In any event, once it was done, the SRA put me on the rolls, which is still one of my proudest moments.

I am now in the unique position of being a qualified master mariner and maritime lawyer practicing maritime law and still investigating maritime accidents. I have on a number of occasions represented captains in courtrooms and police stations all over the world and, to be able to give back and protect the maritime industry and those in it, is extremely rewarding.

But not one for resting on my laurels, I have continued my studies and am very proud to have been awarded my LLM with distinction from Staffordshire University this year. I can now say that I am a master mariner and master of laws. I am now looking to continue with a PhD, where I hope my studies will benefit the maritime industry.



# Staying well over Christmas

*Our Student Wellbeing Team gives some advice on staying mentally well over the Christmas break.*

Well this year has been tough! It started with Australian bushfires, Prince Harry and Megan Markle quit the royal family, then we got hit with a pandemic, we entered a long period of lockdown, the killing of George Floyd sparked Black Lives Matter protests, Murder hornets arrived in the US, a massive explosion hit Beirut, we entered another lockdown and Joe Biden became president-elect.

Can any more major events happen this year? Well maybe it can but it's important that we recognise this has been pretty tough for us all, especially on our mental health.

***“We aren't all in the same boat, but we are all riding the same storm”***

As we move into winter, it can be a lonely and challenging time for many people. People may have lost loved ones, be struggling at home, have no family nearby or missing loved ones as we follow the latest guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our bubbles. It's really important we take time to ask one another 'are you ok?'.  
Five ways to wellbeing

Try just taking one of the NHS five steps to wellbeing to improve your mental health

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1. **Connect with other people** – Christmas can be a time for connecting with other people and it might be that this year it must be via video call. It's important to stay in touch with family and friends so you can build a sense of belonging, provide an opportunity to share positive experiences and give emotional support. Research suggests that loneliness can be as damaging to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. If you know someone who is alone this Christmas, why don't you give them a call or a message. It could make their day!
2. **Be physically active** – evidence shows physical activity can improve your mental wellbeing. Enjoy the outdoors walking with your bubble.
3. **Learn new skills** – research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing boosting your self-confidence and giving you a sense of purpose, creativity and mental health activity
4. **Give to others** – Christmas is a time for giving and sharing and acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and help you connect with other people. You don't need to buy gifts – giving your time to help someone or having a chat with a lonely person can mean more to someone than anything you could buy.
5. **Pay attention to the present moment** – take moments to have some calm time and a break away from the stresses of everyday life. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better.

As a final note, the world may seem upside down and topsy turvy right now, but people still care. The weather outside might be cold and dark but the world is full of kind people who care. Be Kind to yourself, be kind to others!

## Emergency Support

If you are looking for help in an emergency or feel you need support urgently, you could try one or more of these options (open 24 hours every day unless otherwise stated):

- Phone for an ambulance and/or the Police on 999.
- You can access the NHS 111 Service telephone 111 (24 hrs a day)
- Phone the NHS Mental Health Access Service for South Staffordshire call: 0808 196 3002; South and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin on 0808 196 4501. [www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-community-services](http://www.mpft.nhs.uk/services/mental-health-community-services)
- Phone the NHS Mental Health Access Team for Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire on 0300 123 0907. [www.combined.nhs.uk/our-services/adult-community-accessteam](http://www.combined.nhs.uk/our-services/adult-community-accessteam)



# Support Over Christmas

In addition to the services mentioned overleaf, if you are looking for support outside of our opening times, or are having suicidal thoughts, you might find the following helpful:

## **Togetherall**

Join the online mental health community, accessible anywhere, any-time. Peer support, resources for self-management, information and advice, support programmes. Live therapy can be booked quickly. Open: 7.00 - 23.00, 7 days a week (Monitored 24/7 by trained clinicians) Visit: [www.togetherall.com](http://www.togetherall.com) This site is not intended for use in an emergency (in an emergency, please contact one of the services on the preceding page).



## **Student Space**

Call free on 0808 189 5260 or email [students@themix.org.uk](mailto:students@themix.org.uk). Get free, confidential support by phone from a trained volunteer, from 3pm to 11pm every day.

## **Papyrus HOPELineUK**

Open everyday 9:00am – 12:00pm all days including bank holidays. Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org) Tel: 0800 068 4141 Text: 07786 209697

## **Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline**

Open 19.00 - 2.00 weekdays, 14.00 - 2.00 weekends Tel: 0808 800 2234 Email: [staffordshire.helpline@brighter-futures.org.uk](mailto:staffordshire.helpline@brighter-futures.org.uk) Tel: 07860 022821 Visit: [www.brighter-futures.org.uk](http://www.brighter-futures.org.uk)

## **Samaritans**

Tel: 116 123 (24 hrs every day) Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) Visit: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## **COVID-19 Support**

*If you are isolating, have a positive test result, are showing symptoms, or living with someone who is showing symptoms, then please let us know by completing this form*

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=8nivV33IZkS3u2tsyZ7RJKnUis0W\\_OFIpyeVZ9kYhmNUN1BNTFkwRjMzNTFRVk9YVzVCNIISTTFIUi4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=8nivV33IZkS3u2tsyZ7RJKnUis0W_OFIpyeVZ9kYhmNUN1BNTFkwRjMzNTFRVk9YVzVCNIISTTFIUi4u)

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=8nivV33IZkS3u2tsyZ7RJKnUis0W\\_OFIpyeVZ9kYhmNUN1BNTFkwRjMzNTFRVk9YVzVCNIISTTFIUi4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=8nivV33IZkS3u2tsyZ7RJKnUis0W_OFIpyeVZ9kYhmNUN1BNTFkwRjMzNTFRVk9YVzVCNIISTTFIUi4u)

*If you have any specific concerns you can email [covid-19@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:covid-19@staffs.ac.uk) or you can call the Coronavirus Helpline on **01782 298500***