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LINK

*The newsletter for families
of undergraduate students*

SEMESTER 1 ISSUE
Winter 2020



Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of *Link* magazine in the 2020-2021 academic year.

This is a special issue because it's the first time that *Link* has been sent out in digital format. Since we are still in the throes of the pandemic, we felt that it would be more straightforward and sustainable to do it this way. It also means that we can make it more interactive.

This is also a special issue because we are featuring the wonderful **Can Do initiative** organised by the student community in collaboration with the University. It shows just how creative and inventive our student body is and how brilliantly it has risen to the challenges of this year.

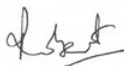
Our cover photograph features one of the first events in the programme - Can Do Cocktails in the Quad. This was such a big success that it became a weekly fixture in the Can Do calendar and will resume once tier three restrictions are lifted. In the meantime it has been replaced with a Can Do Brunch on Saturday mornings!

We have featured the sabbatical officers who have worked with the Provost Dr Monique Mackenzie and the University Can Do team to plan this programme, so you know who they are and what they are doing for students and the local community.

There is also a summary of our recent successes in the league tables and an update on some of our cutting-edge, Covid-related research.

Please do contact families@st-andrews.ac.uk if you have any comments or suggestions for future issues.

With best wishes,



Robert Fleming, Director of Development



Hearts in the Quad featuring socially distancing students

St Andrews Can Do



Students helping out at the Community Action Day – part of the Can Do initiative

This year and in particular this semester we have all had to adapt to new rules – mainly telling us what we can't do. Isolation has become a global theme and many people are missing the everyday connections with friends, family and colleagues that we previously took for granted.

The **Can Do initiative** – a collaboration between the Students' Association, Saints Sport and the University – was born out of this strange time. It is all about finding new and innovative ways to share experiences and to create meaningful bonds with each other within the University and local community.

Can Do involves a very large marquee on Lower College Lawn for socially distanced activities, a calendar of events, a helpdesk and a guide.

We asked Dan Marshall, Student Association President about the how, why, what, when and where of this fantastic initiative.

How did you come up with this idea?

Throughout the summer and the start of the semester we've mainly had to tell students and staff what they can't do because of the coronavirus. But then we started to think that there are still a lot of things that we CAN DO if we stick to the guidance – such as meeting up with friends on the beach or grabbing a coffee in Rectors café – so we thought it was important to promote this!

The concept of the Can Do initiative is not only to make sure people understand what they CAN DO within the guidance, but also to provide spaces for events and a process through which events can be approved and made safe.

Where's the marquee and what's its purpose?

The marquee is on Lower College Lawn right in the heart of St Andrews! It contains four pods (named Bengal, Hamish, Panda and Tripod after cats that are famous amongst the student body!). Each can hold 30 people standing or sitting 2m apart.

Because the Students' Association handed over our largest venues to the University for teaching, there wasn't a lot of space for society activities. The marquee was a perfect solution to this.



Photograph of Philip Colbert's installation – **The Death of Marat and the Birth of the Lobster**. The giant inflatable crustacean appeared in time for Can Do Cocktails in the Quad on Friday 23 October 2020.

Why is this benefiting students?

We know that being stuck inside all day can put a strain on mental health and make it more difficult to get to know new people, which is a major part of what university is about. The idea of Can Do is therefore to equip students with the information and spaces they need to return to some in-person activities and get the most out of their time at St Andrews.

What's the purpose of the helpdesk and the guide?

Government guidance on Covid is complex and changes regularly. The helpdesk and guide are designed to form a one-stop information point about what you can do and answer any questions about the guidance.

When is it happening?

The initiative was launched during Independent Learning Week with a programme of events including the University's largest-ever cocktail party, ballroom dancing classes and a community action day to make St Andrews a cleaner, greener place – oh, and a giant lobster appeared in the Quad. We've encouraged students to submit their ideas via an application form that will help them to access any resources and support they might need.

Thank you!

None of this would have been possible without the donations our alumni and supporters have given to the Covid Appeal. Thank you for being part of our University community and helping us during such a challenging time.

St Andrews' Parents Can Do too!

Since the focus of this issue is on the Can Do spirit of our students and University community, we wanted to take this opportunity to thank you – our parents and families – for being so engaged and proactive. Your support has been invaluable to us.

Many of you will recently have received a letter from the Principal enclosing a message from fellow parents Michelle and Dee Baker.

If – like them – you are interested in supporting the University during this challenging time, read more about how you can [help us provide a safe environment for Covid-friendly Can Do gatherings](#).

Thank you.



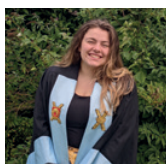
Meet the Sabbaticals

This year's Sabbatical Officers – students who have been elected by their peers to represent them until July 2021 – have been responsible for creating, planning and implementing the Can Do initiative. They are also responsible for helping with all manner of student queries. You can find out more about what they do at <https://www.yourunion.net>



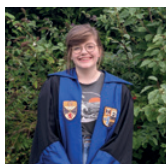
Dan Marshall

Dan is the Association President. His role is to be an advocate for students at every level – from University to local and national political bodies. He is particularly focused on student accommodation, the local community, widening access and outreach, sustainability and the environment, and alumni engagement.



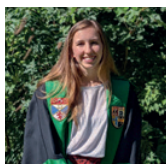
Sophie Tyler

Sophie is the Athletic Union President and as such is in charge of student sport at the University. This encompasses club sport, recreational sport, national and international representation and strategy and governance.



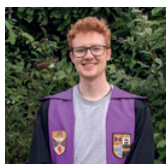
Amy Gallacher

Amy is Director of Education, with responsibility for all matters relating to education, postgraduate studies and employability. She oversees academic representation, including School Presidents and Class Reps.



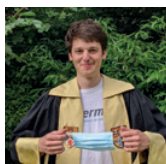
Emma Walsh

Emma is Director of Wellbeing. Her remit covers welfare, equal opportunities, Saints LGBT+, elections and StAnd Together, which includes Peer Support (befriending), Got Consent (Sexual assault and relationships education programme) and Got Limits (alcohol awareness).



Gavin Sandford

Gavin is Director of Student Development and Activities. He oversees the Union's activities through its many societies and subcommittees. Gavin is also responsible for extracurricular development.



Tom Groves

Tom is the Director of Events and Services. His role is to manage the Union's venues and entertainment schedule and oversee commercial services such as bars and cafes. He also helps to oversee the Union's marketing strategy.

Awards



Photo taken in 2019 to celebrate breaking the Oxbridge duopoly.

The University has been recognised for its outstanding success again this year in the league tables.

The *Guardian University Guide 2021* has ranked St Andrews top university in Scotland and second only to Oxford in the UK, with Cambridge now moving to third place. This is the second year in succession that **St Andrews has split the Oxbridge duopoly** by virtue of its high scores for student satisfaction and experience, graduate employment and the quality of our academic programmes.

In addition, **St Andrews has been ranked top in Scotland and third in the UK** in *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021*.

We have also come **top in the UK for student academic experience** in *The National Student Survey 2020*.

These rankings are particularly significant because the surveys were taken mid-pandemic in a year like no other – and yet we still won these remarkable accolades. It shows just what our students and staff can do – even during the most challenging times.

Laidlaw Music Centre

Thanks to a transformational donation from the Laidlaw Foundation, a significant bequest from the late Jean McPherson, and the support of alumni, parents and friends, the Laidlaw Music Centre has now been completed: the vision of award-winning architects Flanagan Lawrence has been realised.

The Laidlaw Music Centre will offer extraordinary and varied spaces for students, staff and community to sing, rehearse, perform and make music in all styles and genres.

The crowning glory of the new building is the McPherson Recital Room, with its reverberation chamber and a fully automated flooring system – the only one of its kind in the world.

As Director Michael Downes says, “It will encourage students to enjoy the sounds they’re making, enable them to experiment and go beyond their comfort zone and inspire them to develop their musicality. It’s also a space where professional musicians and those from the wider community will come to rehearse, record and perform – putting St Andrews in the centre of the musical map of Scotland and beyond.”

This ‘jewel of a building’ – as described by Lucy Russell (Honorary Professor of Strings) – will be used for music making by the University community, the local community and visiting professional musicians from all over the world.

Although we aren’t yet able to invite audiences to this wonderful building, enjoy a virtual [look inside the Laidlaw Music Centre](#) and [listen to some of the Laidlaw Live performances](#) that have recently been streamed from there.



Saanjh – one of the performances in St Andrews Voices 2020 – in the McPherson Recital Room

SaintsFunder news

The **SaintsFunder** crowdfunding platform is available to all students, academics, alumni, staff, Schools and Service Units to raise money for key areas such as academic research, clubs and societies and student experience. It promotes a culture of entrepreneurialism within the University and, as such, sits within the context of the Strategy 2018-2023.



Class Gift 2021

In 2009 a group of graduating students thought about all the wonderful memories and experiences that St Andrews had given them and decided to give back by setting up a Class Gift to support the students following in their footsteps.

Class Gift 2021 is continuing this journey by contributing to the Student Support Fund, which helps students who are in immediate financial need. Awards are available to any undergraduate or postgraduate student experiencing financial difficulty and can be used towards books, IT equipment, rent, bills and groceries.

The Committee have already held a Minecraft 'Build Your Own Dream Accommodation' challenge and Scary Story Competition and have lots of other exciting virtual activities and events coming up.

Follow the progress of Class Gift 2021 and support them if you can.



Soaking for St Andrews

One of our most successful projects to date was a 'can do' response to the strange times we are living in. This wonderful collaboration between students, parents, friends and alumni aimed to raise funds for the University Community Fund (UCF) and keep the spirit of May Dip and Senior Soakings alive and well at the same time.

The UCF is supporting local individuals and organisations who are providing vital aid in St Andrews during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Fellowship – a group of undergraduate and postgraduate students united by their love for St Andrews – organised the Challenge to support the UCF.

Watch this year's May Dip to see how our creative students rose to the challenge of recreating this tradition during the pandemic.

Covid-19 research at St Andrews

New research led by Professor Stephen Reicher (School of Psychology and Neuroscience) and Dr Fergus Neville (School of Management) in collaboration with the University of Sussex and University College London has recently been published in the journal **PLOS ONE**.

The study reveals that copying others' behaviour depends on shared group memberships. Until now, it has been assumed that this is a rather mindless and automatic process called 'contagion'. The new study, however, reveals that things are not that simple.

An interactive experiment that took place at the Science Museum in London revealed that people will follow other in-group members whose behaviour they believe to be relevant for their own. (An in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member.)

During the study over 1,000 volunteers were split into blue and red groups based on a bogus personality test. The researchers added fake blue and red dots which were pre-programmed to act in specific ways, and then examined whether participants mimicked the actions of these dots.

The results showed that participants only copied the behaviour of fellow 'in-group' members (dots who shared their group's colour) and not 'out-group' members (dots who did not share their group's colour). Moreover, participants did not copy others if the task was irrelevant to their group membership.

Professor Stephen Reicher explained: "The fact that people are more likely to imitate others whom they regard as 'in-group' is critical for maximising public compliance with safety protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic. If the public see those who are providing them with guidance as 'we' instead of 'they', adherence to public health measures will be much higher.

[Read the Covid-19 and public compliance article](#) about this fascinating research.



Graduation 2021



Please note that while we are planning in person Graduation ceremonies for both the Class of 2021 and Class of 2020 next year, we will be bound by the Scottish Government guidelines – including travel guidelines – in place at that time. We will, of course, let you know of any developments as soon as we hear them.

Class of 2021

Graduation week is planned to take place week commencing 21 June 2021

Class of 2020

Graduation week is planned to take place week commencing 28 June 2021



Semester dates 2020-2021

Please note that we are bound by Scottish Government guidelines – including travel guidelines – and that these dates are subject to change.

Christmas vacation and inter-semester break		
Christmas vacation	Monday 21 December 2020	
Christmas vacation	Monday 28 December 2020	
Inter-semester	Monday 4 January 2021	
Inter-semester	Monday 11 January 2021	
Inter-semester	Monday 18 January 2021	
Semester 2: Candlemas semester		
Week 1	Monday 25 January 2021	Teaching begins
Week 2	Monday 1 February 2021	
Week 3	Monday 8 February 2021	
Week 4	Monday 15 February 2021	
Week 5	Monday 22 February 2021	
Week 6	Monday 1 March 2021	
Week 7	Monday 8 March 2021	
Week 8	Monday 15 March 2021	
Vacation	Monday 22 March 2021	Spring vacation
Vacation	Monday 29 March 2021	Spring vacation
Week 9	Monday 5 April 2021	
Week 10	Monday 12 April 2021	
Week 11	Monday 19 April 2021	
Week 12	Monday 26 April 2021	Revision week
Week 13	Monday 3 May 2021	Revision week May Day holiday 3 May Exams begin Saturday 8 May
Week 14	Monday 10 May 2021	Semester 2 exams
Week 15	Monday 17 May 2021	Semester 2 exams
Week 16	Monday 24 May 2021	
Summer		
Summer week 1	Monday 31 May 2021	
Summer week 2	Monday 7 June 2021	
Summer week 3	Monday 14 June 2021	
Graduation week	Monday 21 June 2021	Graduation ceremonies Class of 2021
Graduation week	Monday 28 June 2021	Graduation ceremonies Class of 2020



The return of Love from Home!

Our popular online **Love from Home** service – run in cooperation with Fisher & Donaldson – was temporarily suspended because of the pandemic. But now it's back up and running!

You can once again place an order for delicious cakes for your student and add a message to let them know you're thinking of them.

To place an online **Love from Home** order or find out more about the **Family Programme**, please visit our website.

If you have any questions, please contact the Alumni Relations Team at families@st-andrews.ac.uk

Winter Festival

During the dark winter months we are planning a Winter Festival for alumni, parents and friends to keep you entertained and engaged with the life of the University community. The first two events are Meet the Author, with honorary graduate Val McDermid on Tuesday 8 December and an Online Global St Andrews Quiz, hosted by political editor and graduate Brian Taylor on Saturday 12 December.

Join us at one or both of these events! Further details are available from families@st-andrews.ac.uk

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Global Parents Group on
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<https://st-andrewsconnect.com/groups/133/feed>

Semester dates can be found at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/semester-dates

Latest news and other information about the University can be viewed at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk

If you would like to support St Andrews you can find more information on how to donate at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/support or contact: develop@st-andrews.ac.uk

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