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LINK

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*The newsletter for families  
of undergraduate students*

## A message from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sally Mapstone FRSE



Some of you may be seeing the resumption of public life or indications that restrictions could soon ease; others are still practising social distancing to support our collective endeavour to curb the Covid-19 pandemic. But everywhere, people and institutions are recasting their short- and long-term plans for a world that will be irrevocably changed by the pandemic.

This is true here in St Andrews where we have adapted our practices to protect the health and safety of our community and to ensure that students continue to receive a world-class education.

As we look ahead, I recognise that students and their families have additional queries: final year students are concerned about their graduation; our new and returning students speculate about what the next academic year will look like. Whilst uncertainty as to the duration of the virus prevails, we can update you on decisions we have made thus far.

Our University cherishes its traditions and none more so than Graduation. We have provisionally rescheduled the Class of 2020 Graduation for the week beginning 28 June 2021 to allow our students to celebrate with their classmates and families in the quintessential St Andrews way. We will keep this date under regular review.

We have outlined other options to our students, including the right to reschedule their graduation for a future session which is convenient for them and their families within the next three years. The Graduation application form was circulated by the Graduation Office at the beginning of May and our graduands are in the process of conveying their choice of option.

For students who are returning to St Andrews next academic year, or who will join us for the first time, we have concluded that 14 September 2020 is the optimal date to begin the new term in St Andrews. This decision will offer certainty to our students and to you, their families.

In the new semester, we will adopt a model of dual delivery in teaching. Students who can travel safely will be taught in St Andrews in the normal way. For those who may be unable to travel, we will provide comprehensive tuition remotely and a smooth transition to the classroom once restrictions are lifted.

Orientation Week will take place in St Andrews in the normal way from 7 September, and we will provide an online orientation to entrants who have chosen remote learning with us.

This is a stepping stone to a large-scale return to the traditional ways of learning and teaching in St Andrews which have been the cornerstone of our award-winning student experience for many years.

Like all universities, St Andrews is facing significant financial challenges as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, and we are one of a group of leading higher education institutions lobbying and advising at the most senior levels of government in Scotland and the UK for appropriate support.

As a result, we have launched the St Andrews Covid-19 Appeal to provide urgent help to our students, to enable first-rate research that will contribute to the defeat of Covid-19, and to support the University's areas of greatest need at this time. The Appeal also contributes to the University Community Fund, which supports many local organisations that are an integral

part of our community relations and which have been similarly impacted. Further details on the Covid-19 Appeal are included on the inside back cover of this issue.

By the time our students – your children – return to St Andrews, more familiar levels of normality should be restored. However, we should expect that normality to include widespread testing, contact tracing, and supported provision for self-isolation – but there will be substantial reassurance in that. The new world will be one in which St Andrews can thrive; just as importantly,

it's a world which will more than ever need the enquiring minds of our students and the intellectual and professional leadership of our staff, within a safe and supportive environment where everyone can realise their best work.



Professor Sally Mapstone FRSE  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor



## Welcome

This semester so far has been an unprecedented one, but the University community has rallied round and is adapting well to the current situation. The majority of our students are now either at home with you or being safely looked after by us. Wherever they are, they are all now being taught online against all odds, as you will read in the Proctor's message that follows. Their safety and that of our staff, their families and the wider community is our key focus and our staff are working from home wherever possible.

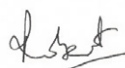
In the midst of these challenging times it's important to remember some of the wonderful and creative ways that the University community is responding to Covid-19. Students and alumni alike have shared their experiences through stories and videos. One alumnus has written a book to reassure his primary class and is donating the proceeds to UK National Health Service charities. It has now been downloaded all over the world and translated into a number of languages.

We have also included news about how the University is responding to Covid-19 in terms of ongoing research.

For all the latest information about Covid-19 please refer to the FAQs section on our website: [www.st-andrews.ac.uk/coronavirus](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/coronavirus)

We hope this issue not only updates you, but also distracts and inspires you! Take care, keep safe and well and keep in touch.

With best wishes,



Robert Fleming, Director of Development

## Delivering against all odds



*Clare Peddie, Vice-Principal Education (Proctor) describes how the University has responded quickly and effectively to provide online teaching and assessment in the face of Covid-19.*

Against the background of the Covid-19 crisis the very good news is that, thanks to the amazing dedication and flexibility of all of the academics and professional staff involved, we are now delivering all teaching and assessment to all our students – wherever they are in the world – through online modes.

At the same time, we have speedily changed policy to support students who have difficulty engaging with their studies remotely, or who may be ill, by creating flexible and permissive options for progression and classification, as well as options for deferral and extensions.

Through our new website provision and communications, we have been informing students (as decisions are made) about the mode of teaching delivery, where to get training and technical support and any changes to assessment and examinations.

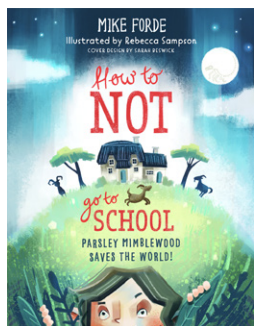
As we have worked through this process, we have found a good balance between helping students to remain engaged and supported in their studies, while being wholly sympathetic to individual students who find themselves in difficult circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

Staff and students alike have rapidly adapted to the concepts of online tutorials and digitally delivered seminars; initial feedback is that many students and staff have been surprised at how the new way of engaging has had such a positive impact on academic dialogue, for example by enabling slightly shy students to come forward in conversation.

The undergraduate students are now finishing their studies for the year and many of them have successfully completed online examinations delivered through our speedily developed examinations portal.

It is hard to believe that only two months ago students were in class in St Andrews and it is a measure of the commitment and tenacity of all the community to find solutions, that the University is delivering against all the odds.

# How to NOT go to School – and help the NHS



*Mike Forde (MA 2014) graduated from St Andrews with a degree in Philosophy and International Relations and ultimately became a primary school teacher in inner-city Birmingham.*

*He decided to write a book – ‘How to NOT go to School’ – to help his primary class adapt to the ‘big and scary changes happening around them’ as a result of Covid-19. It has been published on Amazon Kindle and all the sale proceeds are being donated to NHS charities [www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk](http://www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk). The book is also available to download free from his website: <https://parsleymimblewood.wordpress.com>*

*Here he describes his journey from the ‘the Bubble’ to children’s author with a global following!*

I arrived in St Andrews in September 2010 as a floppy-fringed, colourful-T-shirt-wearing geek with absolutely atrocious facial hair.

I left four years later with floppy hair, a colourful T-shirt, a 2:1 in Philosophy and International Relations – resigned to the fact that I would never successfully grow a beard.

Those four years were some of the happiest of my life and I gained so much from my time here. I was able to represent Scotland in the obscure Dutch sport of Korfbal. I had some of my first opportunities working in education with the University’s Widening Access team. And I even met my partner at a Theology cheese and wine event.

But the other great love of my life began (as do all good ‘Bubble’ stories) in the sweaty kitchen at a mediocre house party of a friend of a friend. That’s where I first heard about STAND. It was going to change everything in student journalism. I wrote a few verbose vapid listicles and bathed for a couple of weeks in the validation of online publication. After that, I was hooked and have been writing ever since.

After university, I’ve been exceptionally lucky in the range of opportunities I’ve been given. I was offered a place on the Charityworks Graduate Scheme which gave me a year of experiences across the not-for-profit sector. Through this scheme, I joined a tiny social enterprise called Twin Café importing Fairtrade coffee from Nicaragua and forging links between communities in Sheffield and the city of Esteli in Nicaragua.

After my time with Twin Café came to an end, I was offered a place on the Teach First programme and worked in a school in inner-city Birmingham before moving with my partner to Lancashire.

When the corona virus shut down my school, I suddenly had a lot of free time and wanted to give the children in my class a tool to help them discuss the massive changes going on in their lives. So, I decided to write them a book. From the perspective of Parsley Miblewood – a whimsical imaginative kid who’s been home schooled all her life – it navigates issues like missing friends, being cooped up together and dealing with emotions. My class seemed to really benefit from the story, so I uploaded it to Amazon Kindle and it’s had a really good response from readers around the world. Hopefully, it can help children to process some of the big and scary changes happening around them at this time.



*How to NOT go to School: Parsley Miblewood Saves the World* is also available to download for free from Mike’s website: <https://parsleymimblewood.wordpress.com>

Read the full blog on Alumni updates: <https://alumni.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk>

# When the going gets tough...



## University response to Covid-19

Not only has the University community adapted quickly and effectively to working from home and online learning – our academics are at the front line of research.

**Professor Rick Randall** is leading a team of virologists who are developing a new test for Covid-19.

Pneumagen – a spin-off led by our **Professor of Molecular Biophysics and former Deputy Principal Professor Garry Taylor** – is testing drug compounds it has developed to combat respiratory pathogens such as the influenza virus to see if these are effective against Covid-19. So far, it has had positive results in laboratory tests.

**Professor Stephen Reicher** is providing advice and briefings to the UK and Scottish governments on the behavioural science of the pandemic.

**Professor David Crossman** – our Dean of Medicine and Chief Scientific Advisor for Health at the Scottish Government – is the vice-chair of a new expert group established to provide additional analysis on the impact of Covid-19 in Scotland.

## Students Against Corona

And the student community is doing its bit, too! One example of student enterprise is Micaiah Lowe (MA 2019) – a member of the University of St Andrews Alumni Club, Los Angeles – who is running the local chapter (OC Against Corona) of Students Against Corona ([www.facebook.com/groups/StudentsAgainstCorona](http://www.facebook.com/groups/StudentsAgainstCorona)) in Orange County, California. The global group was co-founded by fellow St Andrews graduate Frederik Filz van Reiterdank (BSc 2018) and is currently operating in a dozen countries with 2,300 volunteers – including 30 in Orange County.



By joining the group, you can either receive assistance or assist others by doing anything from shopping for groceries or picking up prescriptions from the Pharmacy to dog walking or other jobs. It's not just for students – it's open to all.

# St Andrews Covid-19 Appeal



As the Principal has said, we have all had to make difficult decisions and take steps that would have been unthinkable until recently, which is why we have launched the **St Andrews Covid-19 Appeal** to help our students, reach areas of greatest need at this time and support research that will contribute to the defeat of Covid-19.

[www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/covid-19-appeal](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/covid-19-appeal)

We launched this Appeal to help students who may be concerned about their financial situation. For example, Sarah counts herself lucky to be safe and well at home with her family, she is also anxious about the loss of income from her part-time job:

‘I still have my rent to cover as my lease doesn’t run out until the end of July. I am constantly worrying about making sure there are sufficient funds in my account.’

Since the launch, we have received a wonderful response and have now exceeded our initial target to raise £500,000. Thanks to your support we have already been able to distribute donations to some of our students who can ask for help by contacting the St Andrews Coronavirus Helpdesk at the Advice and Support Centre by email: [theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:theasc@st-andrews.ac.uk) or phone: +44(0)1334 464146

We know that the pandemic has affected many people’s finances adversely and we therefore do not ask for your support lightly. However, these are extraordinary times and any donation you can make – regardless of size – is crucial to many other students like Sarah.

If you are able to make a donation online at this time, it would be very much appreciated.  
[www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/covid-19-appeal](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/development/covid-19-appeal)

Thank you.

## University Community Fund Appeal

In our local community, voluntary bodies of all shapes and sizes are responding to the needs of our residents during this crisis. Not only is their contribution crucial just now – it will also be key to the town’s recovery.

The University wants to recognise this by encouraging applications to its University Community Fund. The fund will accept applications for between £250 and £3,000, including those which benefit communities in the local area (St Andrews and neighbouring communities).

The University would particularly like to encourage projects that propose solutions to community needs during the Covid-19 crisis. All applications to the University Community Fund will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the fund will prioritise small, grassroots charities and community organisations over larger organisations.

To find out more, please visit the community fund web page or contact Lesley Caldwell on [community@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:community@st-andrews.ac.uk).  
[www.st-andrews.ac.uk/community/community-fund](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/community/community-fund)

Thank you. Your help is very much appreciated.

# Poetry for quarantine

*inklight* is the Creative Writing Society of St Andrews. Here is a piece of slam poetry (poetry usually read aloud without props, costumes or music) written by student and *inklight* member Sebastian Taylor. We thought that it would resonate with many of you in the University community just now!

## *Mum on the telephone*

I've been calling my mum pretty much every day since this began. I didn't used to call her— in fact she used to panic when I did. It was usually when I was in trouble. Not at all like my brother who would check in before he got in the car and when he got out. When I called, it was usually to say I was lost somewhere or, on one rare occasion, that I had been concussed. Not that those happened very often. My mum didn't expect me to call. But now I do, I've been calling my mum pretty much every day since this began. And we talk about all sorts of things. We talk about her chickens and we talk about my friends (who I have also been calling). We talk about what I'm eating and who she's talking to on the other side of the fence. We both love talking about our hairstyles, so we'll both change them up every once in a

while to keep things fresh. At first it was weird, I think my mum was waiting for the other shoe to drop. I think she was waiting to hear something bad. But that hasn't happened, yet. I think we're past the shoe falling. And it's nice. And more surprisingly, I'm still calling her. Sure, sometimes we run out of things to say. Then there are pauses. Long pauses. But we always pick it back up. And I'm still calling her. I've been calling my mum pretty much every day since this began. And it's nice.

## Sebastian Taylor



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A forum for US parents of current students can be accessed on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/StAUSParents](https://www.facebook.com/StAUSParents)

Latest news and other information about the University can be viewed at: [www.st-andrews.ac.uk](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk)

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