



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

MIND & MOVEMENT

ISSUE 3

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, SPORT & HEALTH SCIENCES

WELCOME

HEAD OF SCHOOL - DR MIKE RAYNER

Welcome to the third issue of Mind & Movement, celebrating the outstanding achievements and innovations across the. This edition showcases the dedication of our staff and students in advancing knowledge, tackling global challenges, and translating research into real-world impact. From pioneering health and wellbeing initiatives to groundbreaking research in human performance and biomechanics, our community continues to make a difference locally and internationally. As we look ahead, our focus remains on inclusive education, impactful research, and nurturing the next generation of leaders. Thank you for being part of our journey and for contributing to our collective success.



A BANNER YEAR : PROMOTIONS, FELLOWSHIP & TOP CITED ACADEMICS

Dr Mike Rayner has been appointed Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA), recognising his strategic leadership in global curriculum innovation, pioneering dual degree programmes, and championing inclusive, industry-focused education. His award reflects a sustained impact across institutional and international higher education, strengthening access, graduate outcomes, and innovation in teaching.

Complementing this achievement, the School celebrates several staff promotions to Associate Professor and Professor, recognising their outstanding contributions to research, teaching, and leadership.

DR IRIS NOMIKOU- Associate Professor of Communication and Language Development

DR DAPHNE KAKLAMANOU - Associate Professor of Health Psychology

DR TIM EXELL- Associate Professor of Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Science

DR HEATHER MASSEY- Associate Professor of Extreme Environments and Physiology

PROF LEANNE PROOPS- Professor of Animal Behaviour and Welfare

PROF CHRIS JONES- Professor of Environmental Psychology

Adding to these achievements, four members of staff were recently ranked among the top two per cent of the most cited scholars worldwide in their fields, underscoring the School's research impact and international reach- **Prof Aldert Vrij, Prof Mike Tipton, Prof Christopher Wagstaff and Dr Steven Kapp.**

Together, these successes reflect the dedication of the School's academic community, as well as its commitment to empowering staff and students, shaping the future of higher education, and fostering innovation at the University of Portsmouth.



HEATHER MASSEY CONQUERS THE CHANNEL—TWICE!

This summer, Associate Professor Heather Massey (**pictured left**) accomplished an extraordinary feat by participating in not one, but two English Channel relay swims. Heather joined two separate teams, each composed of five swimmers, to tackle the iconic 21-mile stretch between England and France. These relays demanded significant endurance and teamwork, as swimmers rotated through hourly stints in cold, choppy waters, navigating changing tides and unpredictable marine conditions.

Heather's love for outdoor swimming is more than a personal hobby- it deeply influences her academic and research pursuits. The knowledge and experience gained from these challenging swims regularly inform her lectures and interactions with students, bringing real-world insight into the classroom. By enduring physically demanding conditions and successfully working as part of a cohesive team, Heather exemplifies the benefits of resilience, collaboration, and determination.

This now takes her tally up to 6 crossings of the channel by swimming with five successful relay and one successful solo. These Channel swims did more than test physical and mental limits; they also celebrated camaraderie and the collective spirit of adventure. Her achievements reinforce the vital link between academic expertise and practical experience, demonstrating how personal passions can enhance professional impact. The story of Heather's Channel swims highlights the importance of pursuing new experiences and the value of teamwork, both in sport and academia.



HARNESSING SCIENCE : UNRAVELLING HUMAN PERFORMANCE IN CHALLENGING CONDITIONS

Researchers at the Extreme Environment Lab (EEL) are leading innovative efforts to better understand how the human body reacts and adapts under extreme stress and challenging environments. In collaboration with University College London, a recent study used an advanced technique called 'transfer entropy' to map the real-time communication between key physiological systems—such as the heart, lungs, and blood oxygen levels—when participants experienced exercise, low oxygen, and sleep deprivation. The findings show that different organs emerge as central 'information hubs' depending on the type of stress encountered: the heart takes the lead during physical exertion, blood oxygen levels become crucial in low-oxygen scenarios, and breathing rate becomes dominant when both sleep deprivation and hypoxia occur. This whole-body approach reveals the subtle and dynamic interplay between body systems and could pave the way for more effective early diagnosis of health issues, offering insights that single measurements alone may miss.

Extending this expertise, Portsmouth's renowned EELs are supporting the Turner Twins' (**pictured right**) high-altitude expedition in the Himalayas. The twins will climb Mera Peak, with one equipped in historically accurate replica gear from the 1924 Everest expedition and the other in state-of-the-art modern equipment. By closely monitoring their thermal performance, endurance, dexterity, and cognitive function at high altitude, researchers aim to uncover the impacts of past versus present-day clothing and technology on survival and performance. These real-world experiments strengthen the University's reputation for advancing our understanding of human limits, survival, and resilience, and support broader applications in healthcare, sports science, and occupational performance.





DATA-DRIVEN BRA DESIGN TRANSFORMS BREAST CANCER CARE

Researchers from the University of Portsmouth and Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust are pioneering the use of advanced breast biomechanics technology to support breast cancer patients- a first in the field. Building on the University's Research Group in Breast Health's extensive work with healthy women and athletes, this new project studies the unique support needs of women following breast surgery and radiotherapy. The aim is to improve post-operative and post-radiotherapy bra design, enhancing comfort, reducing the risk of tissue damage, and helping women return to exercise and everyday activities.

Innovative methods include sensors, motion detectors, and 3D scanning to analyse changes in breast movement, shape, and structure after treatment, with professional bra fitting to guide support requirements. For the first time, breast cancer patients will receive data-driven insights to inform surgical choices and recovery. Feedback is gathered to assess bra design and exercise posttreatment.

Funded in part by Wessex Health Partners, this collaborative effort seeks to provide much-needed research data to bra manufacturers and healthcare providers. Professor Joanna Wakefield-Scurr and Associate Professor Edward St John highlight the importance of understanding how surgery affects breast biomechanics and support, aiming for findings that can improve quality of life for breast cancer survivors locally and globally.

PIONEERING HEALTH SOLUTIONS: THE OPENING OF CIH-WELL AT PORTSMOUTH

The University of Portsmouth has officially launched the Centre for Integrated Health and Wellbeing (CiH-Well), a major new multidisciplinary hub designed to address complex health challenges across the lifespan, from childhood to older age. The centre's core mission is to tackle health inequalities, ensuring equitable access to quality health and wellbeing for all, regardless of background or geography. It aims to develop practical, evidence-based solutions to a range of pressing issues, including chronic illnesses, mental health disorders, and preventable diseases.

CiH-Well brings together expertise from across psychology, sports and exercise science, social care, biological sciences, health informatics, dental and oral health, pharmacy, pharmacology, and biomedical sciences. Working closely with other university research groups—such as the Centre for Simulation in Health and Care and the Clinical Health and Rehabilitation Team—the centre encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration and real-world impact.

Over the last five years, CiH-Well's members have collectively generated more than £5.4 million in research funding from major bodies such as UK research councils, Innovate UK, and the European Union. A key part of the centre's mission is to foster the next generation of health researchers, with



strong support networks for early-career academics and an emphasis on public and patient involvement.

The centre was launched at a dedicated event featuring talks by University of Portsmouth and external researchers, laboratory tours, and networking, supported by the NIHR Wessex Experimental Medicine Network on the 29th of September (**pictured above**). CiH-Well exemplifies the University's commitment to world-class, innovative, and inclusive research, serving as a driving force for improved health and wellbeing outcomes locally, across the South East, and internationally

FOSTERING COLLABORATION: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OPEN RESEARCH INITIATIVE

The School recently held a successful two-day event on Open Research, which brought together academic and research staff from across all career stages and disciplines within the School.

The first day (**pictured bottom left and right**), held at the Queens Hotel, provided an inspiring setting for reflection and exchange. The event was co-led by two Early Career Researchers: Dr Stefana Juncu and Dr Harry Ramsey. Their cross-disciplinary leadership not only highlighted the importance of empowering early-career colleagues but also achieved notable recognition, with Dr Stefana Juncu being awarded the Improving Research Community Builder Award (IRCBA Fund) from over 100 applications.

Attendees participated in interactive workshops, hands-on activities, and thought-provoking discussions that addressed both the opportunities and challenges of open research. Roundtable sessions encouraged the sharing of best practices, the clarification of misconceptions, and the exploration of effective processes to promote openness and transparency. The collaborative and constructive atmosphere fostered meaningful connections across disciplines, contributing to a growing culture of positive and supportive research practice.

The second day built on these successes, beginning with an engaging presentation from the Octopus team, which introduced innovative methods of sharing and communicating research outputs. This was followed by a recap of key themes from Day 1, before participants gathered for lunch and an afternoon writing retreat. The retreat offered dedicated time and peer support for attendees to apply open research practices to their current projects, including pre-registrations, manuscript preparation, and exploring open access options.

Overall, the event strengthened collaboration, enhanced research skills, and reinforced a strong sense of community within the School. It provided both theoretical insights and practical opportunities to engage with open research, laying a strong foundation for a transparent, inclusive, and forward-looking research culture.

RECOGNITION ACROSS DOCTORAL AND MSC RESEARCH

Md Yeasir Yunus, a third-year PhD student, won the Poster Award at the 2025 EAPL Conference in Vilnius for his research on cultural barriers faced during UK asylum interviews (**pictured top left**). Supervised by Professor Lorraine Hope, Dr Tineke van Veldhuizen, and Dr Jonathan Koppel, his study highlights interpreter challenges and recommends gender-matched arrangements, cultural competence training, and improved translation support.

Rachel Thomson, a second-year PhD student, achieved first place at the Festival of Doctoral Research poster competition (**pictured top right**), celebrated postgraduate research across five University faculties. Her winning poster showcased innovative methods for studying African elephant personality and cognition in Botswana, contributing to sustainable human–elephant coexistence.

Under the supervision of Dr Jazmin Cevalco, MSc Psychology Conversion students Lucy Woodham and Maria Senior each presented original research at the Society for Text and Discourse Annual Meeting in Padua, Italy. Lucy explored embodied mindfulness through “Dancing Is a Gift for the Body,” while Maria examined speaker credibility in “Effects of Filled Pauses.”



Contact us

To send in your stories and successes:
E: thanusha.v-manohor@port.ac.uk

For up-to-date news and stories, follow our account:
Instagram: [@uop_sphs](https://www.instagram.com/uop_sphs)
W: port.ac.uk