

Philanthropy at Keele

IMPACT REPORT

*Looking back at supporter impact
during our 75th anniversary year, 2024*



Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor

As we reflect on a very important year for Keele University, it is my privilege to introduce this year's edition of our Philanthropy Impact Magazine.

In 2024, we proudly celebrated Keele's 75th anniversary – a milestone that offered us a chance to honour our rich history, and the extraordinary contributions of our global community. From our beginnings as a pioneering institution to our continued position as a leader in education and research, Keele remains steadfast in its mission to make a difference in the world.

This year, we have been profoundly inspired by the impact of transformational gifts, particularly those made through gifts in wills. These extraordinary acts of generosity have helped to advance groundbreaking research, fund a new Peace Garden at the heart of campus, and provide innovative facilities within our new Clinical Simulation Suite.

Such contributions serve as a lasting legacy, ensuring that Keele can continue to foster innovation, opportunity, and excellence for generations to come.

As you turn the pages of this magazine, you will discover some of the remarkable ways philanthropic support is shaping our university's future. These stories remind us of the incredible power of giving and the deep connection between our supporters and Keele's mission.

Thank you for your continued belief in and support of Keele University. Together, we are creating a legacy of impact that will endure far beyond our lifetimes.



Yours sincerely

Professor Trevor McMillan OBE
Vice-Chancellor

Celebrating the success of Earth Stories:

A student-led initiative for a sustainable future

Keele University's alumni and donors have long been at the heart of transformative initiatives on campus, and Earth Stories is no exception. In just three short years, this remarkable environmental film festival has made a profound impact on the global stage, thanks in large part to the generosity of our alumni community.

Launched as a student-led initiative, Earth Stories has provided a unique platform for young filmmakers, aged 25 and under, to share their stories addressing the climate crisis, the degradation of nature, and sustainable futures. Initially enabled through the alumni-funded Keele Key Fund, the

project has grown beyond its early vision, provided by the Academic Lead and co-founder James McAteer, to become a beacon of hope, inspiration, and action for sustainable development.

The numbers speak volumes about the festival's reach and influence. Since its inception, Earth Stories has received nearly 5,000 film submissions from creators worldwide. With over 70 Keele students and staff involved in the judging process, the festival exemplifies the power of collaboration and interdisciplinary engagement. The senior judging panel, comprising experts from the UK, Australia, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and India, ensures a global perspective in evaluating the inspiring submissions.

Emily Stevenson, 22, co-founder and current Director explains her thinking:

"Earth Stories exemplifies Keele's commitment to addressing the world's biggest challenges. Supporting young talent to tell these crucial stories not only inspires action but also fosters global conversations around sustainability. I am incredibly proud to be part of a project that empowers the next generation to create change."

Aaliyah Gardner, 22, who has championed Earth Stories as its first Director and who is also a co-founder now working as the first Earth Stories Community Coordinator, echoes these sentiments:

"Seeing the passion and creativity of these young filmmakers is truly inspiring. Their work highlights the urgency of environmental action and showcases the power of storytelling as a catalyst for change. Supporting this initiative has been deeply rewarding."

The impact of Earth Stories extends far beyond its impressive accolades. Winning Keele's Breaking the Mould Award, the Keele Excellence Awards for Sustainability, and being Highly Commended at the prestigious Green Gown Awards in Edinburgh are remarkable achievements. But the real success lies in the ripple effect created by the festival's films. These stories are not just narratives; they are calls to action, fostering a deeper connection between humans and nature while inspiring audiences to envision and work towards sustainable futures.

The festival's annual event, held at the Mitchell Arts Centre community film theatre in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, brings together filmmakers, students, and the wider community for a celebration of creativity and environmental stewardship.

It is here that the power of philanthropy becomes most visible – a space where ideas and action converge, creating a brighter, greener tomorrow.

The additional funding provided by Keele's alumni has allowed Earth Stories to expand its reach, improve its infrastructure, and enhance the experience for filmmakers and audiences alike. From supporting the judging process to facilitating workshops and screenings, these contributions have been instrumental in the festival's continued success.

Mark Thomas (Geography & Geology, Class of 1983), alumnus donor to Earth Stories says:

"I was stopped in my tracks when chatting with current Keele student Aaliyah to find out that Keele had its own film festival focusing on environmental issues. 'Who knew?' I thought, but 5000 young filmmakers from around the world clearly did and have submitted entries over the past three years. At Keele in the late 70s and early 80s, FilmSoc was a big part of my social life and so I was very happy to be involved and give financial support to the Earth Stories festival. I recommend taking half an hour and watching the works of some of these young filmmakers on YouTube."

As Earth Stories continues to grow, so too does the gratitude of the Keele community for its alumni. Your support has turned a vision into a global movement, empowering young voices to inspire change and reminding us all of the transformative power of storytelling.

Chris Ensor (Applied Social Studies & Sociology and Social Anthropology, Class of 1973) and his wife Val Ensor were amongst the first alumni to see the importance of supporting a festival such as this and said

"We have chosen to give our financial support to the Earth Stories project because we want to encourage and empower Keele students and others to promote and raise awareness about climate change on an international level. The Earth Stories project allows young people to demonstrate their film making skills by sharing their concerns and to create inspiring solutions for a more responsible and safer future. Our hope is that other alumni and their families will join us to support this important project now and in years to come."

The next festival Awards Ceremony will be held on 27th March 2025, at the Mitchell Arts Centre, Hanley. Doors open at 6pm.

Stream it live via the Earth Stories YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@EarthStoriesFilmFestival](https://www.youtube.com/@EarthStoriesFilmFestival)

Find out more about Earth Stories:

keele.ac.uk/earth-stories

linktr.ee/earthstories_ff



Aaliyah Gardner (centre left) and Charlie Beale (centre right) receiving the highly commended award at the Green Gown Awards in Edinburgh



The organising team for 2025



Left: Emily Stevenson, Co-Founder and Current Director
Right: Aaliyah Gardner, Co Founder, former Director and current Community Coordinator

Transformational impact made with gifts in wills

Images courtesy of CTD Architects



Peace Garden

Construction is soon to begin on a unique new Peace Garden at Keele University, in celebration of its 75th anniversary and is set to be a space for visitors to the campus, and the entire university community, to enjoy.

The garden would not be possible without the support of alumni of the University and is being funded entirely through alumni and supporter gifts, including a substantial donation coming from a gift in their will from alumna Judith Rowley, who studied English & American Studies & Education at Keele from 1961-1965.

The garden will be located in between the University Chapel and Cherry Tree Walk, with a professionally designed garden encompassing screening, benches, and natural meadow planting to provide a central place for rest and reflection, and a location for wellbeing initiatives to take place.

Lauren Huss, Head of Alumni and Supporter Engagement at Keele University, said: "We are thrilled to soon start work on our new Keele Peace Garden. The idea for this garden came about in direct response to feedback from students, who felt the campus needed a space for reflection and contemplation."

"The central location was chosen to ensure that the garden remains as accessible as possible and that those using the space are not isolated from the activity on campus. We can't wait to see the garden come to life over the coming months."

Keele students were also among those who helped shape the plans, with one saying: "I think the garden will provide a much needed quiet and protective space for students to help with their mental health. It will be a refuge for anyone who is feeling overwhelmed about their studies or the social pressures of university."

"I can imagine the garden providing a place of calming activity, as well as a place to reflect. The option for the space to be used for workshops, like creative writing and storytelling, would also make me feel part of the Keele community in a supportive and understanding environment. I am really looking forward to it."

Local artist creating community art installation for Keele Peace Garden

The Peace Garden will also include a sculptural art installation by local mosaic artist Philip Hardaker, which will be positioned within a central seating area, with a plaque commemorating the anniversary and the alumni donations that have made the garden possible.

As part of a series of events held throughout summer and autumn 2024, Phil Hardaker has been on campus hosting tile-making workshops to produce tiles which he will incorporate into the art installation. These drop-in style activities have been free to participants and open to all, thanks to a kind donation from alumnus Professor Phil Davies (American Studies & Sociology and Social Anthropology, Class of 1971), who is a keen supporter of the Keele University Arboretum and National Collection of Flowering Cherry Trees.

In an effort to engage staff, students, and members of the public in creating their own printed clay tiles with peaceful words and imagery, Phil, supported by ArtsKeele, has held tile-making workshops in various locations on campus. People were guided in creating their very own paper-based design, and then helped to transfer this on to clay slabs.

A selection of these tiles will go on to be included in a beautiful artwork in the new garden.

Previously, Phil has created several stunning pieces of art around campus, in other locations nearby, and across the country. He has a career spanning 50 years through which he has explored and commented upon themes including peace, war, climate change, love, home, sexuality and race.

Phil also held an exhibition in the Keele Art Gallery from October to December 2024. More information about this can be found on our web pages:

keele.ac.uk/about/events/2024/october/philhardakerexhibition/inourtime.php



Keele unveils new simulation suite with support from a gift in a will

Keele University has unveiled a state-of-the-art, multi-million-pound healthcare simulation suite, revolutionising the training for future healthcare professionals and providing a safe learning environment where theoretical knowledge can be practically applied, fostering skill development and competency without compromising patient safety. This immersive experience promotes continuous learning and excellence, preparing students for professional practice.

While simulation is an age-old technique, its modern application in healthcare education offers invaluable opportunities for students to bridge theory and practice. The healthcare simulation suite allows students to practice autonomously, evaluate scenarios, and build decision-making skills in a safe space, enhancing both competence and confidence. Unlike traditional methods, simulation engages cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains, helping students form new memories that inform real-life decision-making.

The building features diverse environments, including two six-bedded wards, five consultation rooms, a theatre, an imaging suite, a CT scanner, a fully equipped home for daily living activities, a virtual reality space, a sensory room, and three large flexible spaces.

Control rooms connect all teaching spaces with cameras, microphones, and speakers, creating a seamless simulation environment.

Students can work independently, in groups, or interprofessionally, encountering a wide range of scenarios from patient assessments and treatments to high-stakes situations like major incidents or cardiac arrests. These experiences, followed by facilitated debriefs, support continuous learning and emotional resilience.

Feedback from students and faculty staff has been overwhelmingly positive. The realistic environment has even made staff feel like they are in a real clinical setting. Students have expressed a desire for more simulation, with comments like, 'Despite initial nerves, the experience proved to be a catalyst for personal and professional growth.'

A gift in a will from Dr David Gibson OBE has contributed to the extensive equipment costs, which are integral in ensuring the suite offers an authentic learning environment. Dr Gibson, a former Member of Council at Keele, chose to leave an unrestricted gift to Keele, which allowed the University to prioritise and use the funding where it was most needed.

The simulation suite is essential for expanding student cohorts and supporting research at Keele University. By collaborating with local healthcare providers, we aim to become a central hub for professional training and community outreach.

To find out more or enquire about collaborating, contact Professor Naomi Shiner, Faculty Lead for Simulation, via alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk.

Legacy gift funds medical research at Keele

Local resident Joseph Herbert Boughey made a gift in his will to support medical research at Keele, a choice that will continue to have a positive impact on the lives of those who will benefit in the future from the research that takes place.

Joseph's gift will go toward funding three PhD projects in the Keele University School of Medicine, two of which have also been kindly match-funded by the Haywood Foundation.

Tom Kingstone, Primary Community and Social Care, is the lead supervisor on one of the projects, SOAR (Supporting older adults with low mood to access care in rural areas), and said of the project: "Older adults (60yrs+) living in rural areas are disadvantaged when it comes to accessing support for mental health problems, such as depression."

"This PhD provides an opportunity to work with rural community members to explore these disadvantages and then co-design solutions to support help-seeking for depression. The student will lead development of a new Rural Mental Health Research Partnership to embed public involvement at all stages."

The two other projects supported by the legacy gift are: 'Addressing biopsychosocial-spiritual needs in osteoporosis consultations: a mixed methods study' and 'Illness perceptions and outcomes in people living with gout', with studies due to commence in 2025.



To find out more about any of these projects, please email alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk

Find out more at haywoodfoundation.org

Did you know you can leave Keele a gift in your will of 1% of your estate, which ensures your family inherits the remainder? Every % makes 100% difference.

To leave a gift, the only information your will writer needs is our exempt charity number X80032.

If you would like to discuss in more detail, please email alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk

Gift in a will helps fund cancer research

The incidence of cancer has been increasing steadily, nowadays affecting 1 in 2 people. While the diagnosis and treatments have improved over the years, too many people perish from this disease.

When cancer develops, it could shed cancer cells into the blood system even at early stages of tumour formation, which could in turn cause metastases. Many cancer deaths are caused by the metastatic burden rather than the primary tumour.

Thus, early diagnosis is paramount as it increases the chances of long survival and even cure. Within this remit, Professor Josep Sulé-Suso's team at Keele University has developed a new method to identify single cancer cells in blood.

In collaboration with Professor Paul Roach at Loughborough University, Professor Sulé-Suso has been using an infrared light to detect single cancer cells in blood based on

the chemical differences between cancer cells and blood cells. The technology is called 'Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy' and this novel application in detecting cancer cells in blood can be applied in screening people at risk of developing cancer; diagnosing cancer earlier; assessing how well cancer responds to treatment; and detecting early cancer recurrence after the treatment is completed.

The funds provided to Keele by a gift in a will from Mr Desmond Howe are now supporting a full-time PhD student, Charlotte Evans, to further this work so patients with most types of cancer can benefit. Charlotte is based at the Guy Hilton Research Centre, Keele University, where she took a Masters course on Cell and Tissue Engineering.

Since a young age, she has been interested in science and medicine and this passion has only grown the more she advanced her career. This PhD studentship is providing her further knowledge on cancer cell biology, chemistry and data analysis. The combination of all these should help her to develop a pan-cancer tool to improve the management of cancer.

If you would like to find out more about this research, please email alumni.hq@keele.ac.uk



Keele establishes doctoral scholarships programme to tackle issues facing rural communities

Keele University researchers from across the humanities and social, physical, and environmental sciences have come together to establish the new doctoral scholarships programme to tackle the multifaceted issues facing rural communities in Britain.

The Sustainable Rural Futures Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Programme (SURF) has been funded by a £2.2m grant from the Leverhulme Trust to understand and solve the real-world problems faced by those who live and work in the British countryside.

Collaborating across disciplines

SURF will provide up to 21 PhD Scholarships to study a range of topics like peat restoration, artisan quarrying, sustainable transport and energy, the rural housing crisis and rural poverty, through to biodiversity entrepreneurship and adventure. Those on the scholarships will also offer insight into such problems as engrained land management structures, declining and difficult-to-access rural services, inadequate rural housing and transport provision, agricultural profitability and hidden rural inequality.

As well as the issues facing British wildlife, highlighted by the prominent 'Save our Wild Isles' campaign, rural communities in the UK face a wide variety of complex and multifaceted problems, often exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and climate change.

Solutions for rural communities

This programme aims to tackle a growing sense of rural crisis by bringing together an interdisciplinary team of humanities scholars, ecologists, environmental scientists, geographers, geologists, social scientists, economists, psychologists, astrophysicists, and technologists to support the next generation of innovative rural researchers.

SURF's scholars will work alongside rural communities to develop replicable real-world solutions which will allow them to prosper, live healthier and more sustainable lives, and preserve their heritage and traditions.

Professor Clare Holdsworth, Director of SURF, said: "We have allowed the problems of rural areas in Britain to suffer from relative neglect for too long. I am absolutely delighted to be leading this essential Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Programme, which will refocus our attention towards the many challenges for rural people in Britain."

Dr Ben Anderson, Deputy Director of SURF, said: "I am thrilled at the opportunity to help direct a new generation of rural researchers. A healthy, prosperous, and sustainable rural domain is crucial to any positive vision of a future Britain; SURF will help to tell us how that can be achieved."

Paul Miner, Head of Policy and Planning at CPRE, The Countryside Charity, added: "Our rural areas face some major, if often little understood, challenges. Key among these are low average incomes, a severe shortage of housing people can afford, and a lack of sustainable transport options. Our countryside is, at the same time, a unique environmental resource and an increasingly important place for peace and quiet and recreation. How we reconcile these challenges and functions is of critical importance. The Sustainable Rural Futures programme is thus very timely, and we look forward to working together over the coming years."

Professor Mark Ormerod, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost at Keele University, added: "I am delighted by this prestigious Leverhulme Trust award to establish this exciting new cross-institutional Doctoral Scholarships Programme in Sustainable Rural Futures, reflecting the genuine research expertise we have across the humanities and social, physical and environmental sciences in this crucially important area."

Watch a short video about the project: keele.ac.uk/sustainable-rural-futures



Keele arthritis research in charity's top 10 Research Highlights of the Year

Researchers from the School of Medicine have been commended for their work by a national charity which ranked one of their studies as a Top 10 Research Highlight of the Year.

A Keele study was featured on a list of influential studies celebrated by Versus Arthritis, which features Keele researchers Professor Christian Mallen, Professor Krycia Dziedzic, and Dr Michelle Marshall.

The study published earlier this year saw the team developing a new classification criterion for 'hand osteoarthritis'. The new criteria developed by the international research team will help include more diverse patient groups in research, leading to more targeted treatments and improved outcomes for people with arthritis.

Professor Dziedzic said: "This paper describes for the first time a way of classifying hand osteoarthritis into hand joint groups [meaning] research to determine effective treatments can be better targeted to alleviate the detrimental impact of hand OA."



New purpose-built insectary will enhance Keele's world-leading research

Keele University is to create a new purpose-built insect research laboratory on its campus – where scientists will carry out vital research to tackle the spread of deadly diseases and reduce crop losses to pests in the UK and across the globe.

The new laboratory will be developed with the help of a £623,000 grant from the Wolfson Foundation, which will enable Keele to further enhance its international reputation as a world leader in entomology.

The facility will feature seven environmentally controlled walk-in chambers to house a range of insects. The chambers will be fully insulated and programmable to create and maintain precise climate conditions, including sunlight, humidity and temperature controls.

The laboratory will allow scientists at Keele to advance their studies of insects and their relationship to humans, the environment and other organisms. This work aims to discover new and improved ways of halting the spread of deadly mosquito-borne diseases, and the destruction of crops by insects.

Professor Mark Ormerod OBE, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost of Keele, said: "I'm delighted that we have secured significant funding from the Wolfson Foundation to help fund our new insect-research laboratory in the School of Life Sciences. Our current insectary facility underpins much of the entomology research at Keele but to sustain and build on our internationally leading position and reputation for entomology research at Keele, we need to invest in a new laboratory.

"This new insectary will provide a step-change increase in the quality of facilities to support current and future entomology projects, enable future studies, maintain a strategic capability, and continue to further enhance Keele's international reputation as a world leader in entomology."

Pip Beard, Professor of Viral Pathology and Head of Keele's School of Life Sciences, who led the funding bid, said: "Keele has a long track record of excellence in entomology. The research carried out at Keele has provided novel, environmentally-sound solutions to insect pest problems such as genetically modified mosquitoes to interrupt the spread of malaria, and synthetic pheromones to reduce crop losses due to thrips.

"The University has identified fundamental and applied entomological research in Life Sciences, Chemical Ecology and Global Health as one of its major areas of research excellence and a key strategic target for further investment. We are moving forward rapidly in this area and have made significant institutional investment in new research-led academic appointments at all levels in the area, to build capacity and excellence."

"These appointments are underpinned by continuing strong growth in our undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers in biosciences in recent years."

The Wolfson Foundation is an independent charity with a focus on research and education. Its aim is to support civil society by investing in excellent projects in science, health, heritage, humanities and the arts. Since it was established in 1955, some £1 billion (£2 billion in real terms) has been awarded to more than 14,000 projects throughout the UK, all based on expert review.

Paul Ramsbottom, Chief Executive of the Wolfson Foundation, said: "Access to a modern, well-equipped insectary will allow entomologists at Keele to pursue vital research in fields such as halting the spread of deadly mosquito-borne diseases and minimising crop losses, both here in the UK and – crucially – in the Majority World. We are delighted to be funding this important project."

The Wolfson 
Foundation



Dr Roberto Galizi

Keele University malaria research receives \$750,000 backing from prestigious philanthropic foundation

Keele University has received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop new technologies to support global efforts to control and eliminate malaria.

Supporting global efforts

Although great progress has been made in reducing its transmission, malaria still causes hundreds of thousands of deaths every year, primarily in Sub-Saharan African regions.

The \$750,000 project led by Dr Roberto Galizi from Keele's School of Life Sciences, in collaboration with the Sharakhov Laboratory at Virginia Tech (USA), will leverage their recent research work to advance the understanding of the specific genes regulating mosquito reproduction.

This will help the scientists to finetune their ability to edit genes within specific cells of *Anopheles gambiae* mosquitoes – a species that can act as a vector for malaria-causing parasites – as a means of controlling their populations.

Modifying mosquitoes to reduce malaria transmission

Malaria is a vector-borne disease transmitted through the bite of infected female mosquitoes. Only a few specific species are able to transmit parasites from infected to non-infected humans. By introducing or altering specific genetic sequences in the insects, scientists can reduce their ability to reproduce or transmit disease.

A deeper understanding of when specific genes are active in malaria-carrying mosquitoes – and how these genes become active – will allow researchers to tailor the use of innovative genetic modification technologies to reduce the transmission of deadly diseases by manually modifying or drastically reducing certain mosquito populations that carry these diseases.

Research helping to save lives

Dr Galizi said: "Understanding how and when genes are regulated in mosquitoes is crucial to develop efficient methods to control the few species that are able to spread diseases. Malaria is still causing tremendous devastation in Sub-Saharan Africa and demands new and more efficient tools to work towards global elimination that we are all hoping to achieve soon. Our work with colleagues will be limited to provide new knowledge and proof of concepts in laboratory settings and no field releases will be conducted as part of the research currently proposed.

"This funding will enable us to develop and apply advanced approaches to increase precision and effectiveness of gene editing in insects to impair their ability to reproduce or transmit pathogens. We're enormously grateful to the Gates Foundation for their support and we are excited to initiate this work at Keele with the support of some outstanding collaborators."

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



2024's recipient of the prize is Hannah-May, third from right

Alisha Zaman Memorial Prize

The Alisha Zaman Memorial Prize was created in memory of Alisha Zaman who was a biological sciences student at Keele (2017-2020) when she sadly passed away, aged 21.

Alisha was a Student Ambassador, Class Voice Representative, and International Social Media Coordinator in which capacities she helped students and represented the University at her level best. She loved nature and was kind to vulnerable animals, with the quote "be kind to everything that lives" reflecting her own philosophy of life.

The winner of the prize in 2024 was Hannah-May Walker who said: "Receiving this year's Alisha Zaman Memorial Prize is a great honour. I truly admire Alisha's great contribution to Keele University and Life Sciences, as well as her devotion to nature and the environment. Upon starting university, I was initially unsure on what particular aspect of biology I was interested in. However, before long, my passion for ecology and the environment was clear.

"Keele University has enabled me to grow this passion through countless exciting opportunities to partake in environment-based fieldwork, seminars and projects. Leading from this, I completed my dissertation based on the reproductive behaviour of freshwater shrimp, in which I achieved 90%, as well as graduating with a First Class Honours in Biology. Since completing my degree, I have been volunteering with local environmental groups, particularly looking at animal surveying and restoration of the River Trent.

"I will forever acknowledge Alisha's memory through this award and the lasting feelings of pride and honour that came alongside it."

Hannah-May Walker

"My studies at Keele University have been especially rewarding and the friends and experiences I have gained from this time are unforgettable. Receiving the Alisha Zaman Memorial Prize has made my time at university absolutely exceptional and I couldn't possibly be prouder to receive this prize.

"I want to give my utmost thanks to Alisha's family for generously providing this award. I will forever acknowledge Alisha's memory through this award and the lasting feelings of pride and honour that came alongside it. The funding from this prize will have a significant impact on my life through supporting my goal of learning how to drive and starting a future career in ecology."

2024's recipient of the prize is Hannah-May, third from right

Keele Postgraduate Association Bursary

The Keele Postgraduate Association (KPA) is Keele's specialist postgraduate (PG) students' union - the only separate union in the country to take care of PG-specific issues. Their primary charitable objective is to provide support for postgraduates, which guides all their activity; this includes lobbying and working together with the University, working in collaboration with Keele Students' Union, and helping to build and develop Keele's postgraduate community.

The KPA Bursary is a scheme that aims to help postgraduates engage in extracurricular activities. Any individual postgraduate at Keele University can apply for between £50-£500 to engage in activities outside of their course which will help their personal and academic development. The bursary is supported by gifts from alumni donations.

In 2024, the bursary allocated out £13,706 in funding. Bursaries ranged in size from £73 to £500, and 40 awards were made in total with an average award of £342, a significant increase on previous years; highlighting both the increase in activity costs due to inflation and the increase in demand for the bursary. Here are some words from this year's recipients:

"I want to reiterate my thanks to the KPA and the alumni fund for making my trip possible. It has been a rewarding and inspiring experience, and it has reinvigorated my passion for nineteenth century literature and the rewards of sharing my research."

Rebecca Dawson, PhD candidate in Victorian Literature - attended the British Association for Victorian Studies Conference and Gladstone's Library.

"I believe that, thanks to the support of the KPA bursary, attending this course has enhanced my skills as a medieval historian and researcher. It has provided me with expert professional development that I could not have accessed by any other means. I am eternally grateful for the support of the KPA as both a PhD student and a historian."

Catherine Clarke, PhD candidate in Medieval History - attended a course on Medieval Account Rolls and Documents in the 13-15th Century at the 2024 London International Paleography School.

"All in all, attending the BACP conferences provided a unique opportunity to immerse myself in the professional community of counsellors and counselling researchers. I had the chance to network with experienced practitioners, fellow trainees, and leading researchers in the field. These interactions were not only inspiring but also informative, offering different perspectives on various counselling topics. Engaging with the community helped me appreciate the diversity and richness of the counselling profession, reinforcing the importance of collaboration and continuous learning.

"Since attending the conferences, I have been sharing my important learnings and relevant resources with my course mates and fellow trainees at my placements, as well as applying these learnings into my practice and academic work. I am grateful to the KPA for the support and will continue to share my learnings with the counselling community near and far."

Zoey Nguyen, MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy - attended two conferences organised by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

"Reflecting upon my attendance at this event, it was of clear benefit to me as a developing scientist. Not only did it teach many useful laboratory tips which I can take forward in my career but also offered an excellent opportunity to begin developing the vital communication skills required of researchers to ensure that findings can be disseminated effectively, and resources and knowledge shared in collaboration. It was likewise highly influential, insofar as it has aided in ensuring that Keele research facilities remain up-to-date in the techniques utilised."

Elliot Bramwell, PhD candidate in Life Sciences - attended the 2023 CCP4 Northern Structural Biology Meeting, along with members of his lab group.



Student of the Year | Charlotte Kirkham



An aspiring performer who turned to academia when she was forced to give up her dream of becoming a professional dancer after undergoing a major spine operation has been named Keele University’s Student of the Year.

Charlotte Kirkham was training in musical theatre at a dance academy near her home in Surrey when she underwent surgery in 2019 for Bertolotti Syndrome, a condition of the spine that causes pain and reduced mobility in the lower back.

It forced the then-20-year-old to rip up her career plans and look at other options, and in July, Charlotte graduated from Keele with a degree in Criminology and Psychology, as well as receiving the University’s Neil and Gina Smith Student of the Year award for 2024.

Charlotte said: “I had the surgery a week after turning 20 and I thought I’d go in, have the operation and go back to the academy where my space was waiting for me and everything would be fine.

“After the operation I could walk quite quickly but that was about it, and I soon started to realise how long it would take to get back to the level I was at before. Within a month I knew I had to put my health first and find something else to do, so I started to look at going to university. I researched a few and Keele really stood out to me with its combined honours, because it allowed me to keep my options open and cover a wider range of subjects.

“I do look back sometimes at my dancing and wonder ‘what if’, but at the same time I am so grateful for coming to Keele and what I do now, and I think maybe something in the universe decided this is what I am supposed to be doing.”

During her studies, Charlotte, now 24, clocked up more than 800 hours of volunteering across a range of activities and initiatives.

She led a group of students to found the KeeleSU Make a Smile charity-affiliated society, where members volunteer their time to dress as fictional princesses and princes to provide happy experiences for children with disabilities and illnesses.

She also led the Keele Panthers Cheerleading Club as Vice-Captain and, through this, has raised approximately £4,000 for Team England’s adaptive abilities cheer team to support initiatives to promote inclusivity in sport.

Charlotte completed an international year at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, where she was invited to join the National Society of Collegiate Scholars in recognition of her academic achievements.

On returning to Keele, she volunteered with the University’s Global Opportunities team as a Peer Advisor, inspiring and guiding fellow students to pursue opportunities to study abroad.

Charlotte also acted as a Lead Student Voice Representative for her School and has been involved in working groups across the University in relation to improving student voice opportunities, and as an ambassador for the School on University open days, sharing her experiences on the course with prospective students and applicants.

Charlotte, who is now studying a Masters at Keele in Social Science, also received awards for achieving the best overall performance in Criminology, and the highest mark for the Psychology final year project module.

She said: “I’m someone who has always kept myself busy and I like to make a difference and help other people wherever I can. I’d like to do a PhD after my Master’s and be able to use my studies to hopefully make a difference in the world.

“It’s really quite overwhelming to receive the award and it came as a big surprise, but I genuinely enjoy the stuff that I do so it never feels like work to me. University has been a fantastic experience for me and has changed me as a person for the better.”

Learn all about the shortlisted candidates on our web pages: keele.ac.uk/studentoftheyear

GivEnergy 850 Learning Lab success

In July 2024, the Higher Horizons team, in partnership with Newcastle-under-Lyme Council as part of their 850th anniversary, welcomed 87 students in high school Year 10, along with their teachers, to a two-day residential summer school at Keele University.

Aimed at immersing students in a real-life campus experience with a focus on sustainability and green energy, the project was funded entirely by GivEnergy, as part of their continued investment in education and the community.

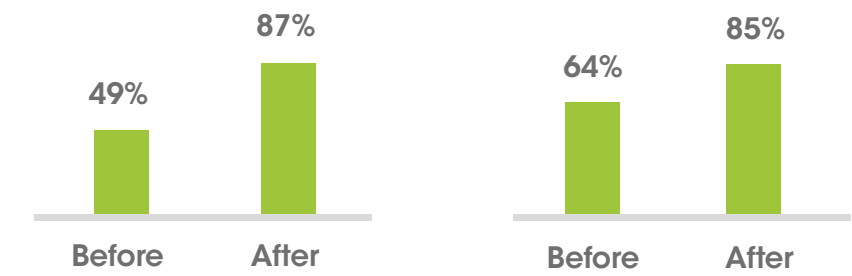
Students enjoyed sessions on coding, smart homes, Keele’s Smart Energy Network Demonstrator, and seminars on life in Higher Education. Students also watched presentations from the team at GivEnergy as well as a welcome from Adam Jogee, MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Feedback was taken from students and staff before and after the two days, and the results were overwhelmingly positive as the below infographics show.



GivEnergy850 Residential, Multiple Schools, 1-2 July 2024

Impact Snapshot 2023/24



“I understand what studying at university would be like”

“I feel I would be supported at university”



Understanding what life at university would be like



“It’s given me confidence”

“I learnt a lot about smart homes, they’re the future”

“I learnt business skills”

Keele Key Fund

Thanks to the generosity of donations to the Keele Key Fund, more than £406,000 has now supported 140 innovative projects that have made a positive impact on the student and staff experience at Keele, and also to the local community through outreach projects.

Here are some of the projects that were awarded funding in 2024.



Boosting public health with wellbeing education and activity workshops

Staff and students from Keele University's Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Clinic are helping to boost people's health and wellbeing in the local area with the launch of two new workshops.

- **Health and Wellbeing:** a four-week programme, made up of one-hour weekly informal and friendly sessions, where staff and students work with participants to educate and guide them to make positive changes to their health and wellbeing, with simple exercises, habits, and lifestyle changes that can have a long-term positive impact on physical and mental health. Understanding what makes us healthy, the importance of activity, stress management and changes for the future are all on the agenda, with physical activities including a strength circuit class, group walk on campus, and desk-based posture and core exercises.
- **Ageing Well:** aimed at people over 60 who want to know more about ageing, and maintaining mobility and strength, with topics including 'what is arthritis?', 'nutrition in older age', and 'the importance of balance', as well as incorporating a weekly exercise class designed to promote strength, balance and flexibility.

The Key Fund has enabled the project to turn years of planning and development into reality by providing enough funding to equip participants with materials for use both during and after the classes.

"I have run the 4-week workshop twice now and each time participants are leaving feeling more empowered and equipped to make positive changes to their lifestyle to improve their wellbeing. Although it remains in its infancy, the preliminary results show a 20-45% increase in mental health outcomes following the 4-week course. It's a very rewarding project with real potential to improve the wellbeing of some or many. Thank you for your support."

Katie Brown, Clinic Director of the Physiotherapy & Rehabilitation Clinic

To participate in future workshops or find out more about the clinic's services, email sahp.physioclinic@keele.ac.uk.



Chemistry Student Outreach Ambassadors

Funds enabled Chemistry students to be recruited as a small team of ambassadors to run outreach activities for young children locally, including fun science experiments like exploring polymers through alginate worms and testing the pH of liquids found around the home.

For the students involved, benefits included improving their communication skills, gaining experience for their CV, and simply a sense of doing something good. For the children visiting the activity stands, they got hands on and fun exposure to science activities, with Keele Day in June 2024 being a fantastic platform for reaching hundreds of people.

"This project was a pilot scheme for some of our outreach activities, and they will be expanded and carried forward based on the work to date. The outreach scheme allowed us to inspire young minds through science activities, whilst giving our current students valuable skills they can take into the employment world. The project was fantastic to be a part of, as the children saw the magic in science. We hope to have encouraged them to ask more questions about the world around them."

Rebecca Ruscoe, Lecturer in Chemistry & Chemistry Outreach Lead

Sustainable period products

Funding was awarded to enable students to access packs of sustainable period products, so that they could be tried without students needing to make a sizeable financial outlay to try these eco-conscious products. Most students who applied to take part in the scheme were looking to use the packs from a sustainability angle, to reduce waste and also to reduce monthly costs. Several students mentioned that they had wanted to try a sustainable option for a while but had been unable to justify the price in case they were not suitable.

Applications opened in line with Environmenstrual Week during October 2024, and the project leads are looking forward to collecting feedback from students to assess the impact the scheme has had.

"I would like to thank all of the donors for giving this project the opportunity to support students to access a more sustainable period product option, which does not only help the environment from a sustainability point of view, but also helps the student financially."

"I'm hoping that this project has started more conversations for students around sustainable period products and the impact single use items can have on the environment."

Ann Clowes, Financial Support Officer



Under Construction

'Under Construction' is an opportunity for postgraduate researchers studying Humanities and Social Sciences at Keele to publish a journal article and experience the publishing process whilst still a student.

Keele Key Fund donations enabled the project team (PhD students themselves) to create promotional materials to promote the journal, including pop-up display banners, flyers and posters. Additionally, those in the team have been able to gain experience as peer reviewers and editors too.

"The impact for those being published is that they can add this to their CV and reach a wider audience with their articles. They will gain confidence and experience in publication, preparing them for future academic endeavours."

"Without the funding for the promotional materials, we would be unable to bring Under Construction to wider notice. We have been able to publicise the journal and ensure that new postgraduate research students are aware of the journal as soon as they start at Keele and promote it more widely."

Cathy Clarke, Under Construction joint project lead & PhD candidate in Medieval History



Sports tracking camera for Keele Rugby Clubs

Both Keele men and women's rugby have been able to benefit from the purchase of a sports tracking camera to enable them to record and analyse matches, thanks to Key Funds. They have also been able to share the footage with opposing teams such as Harper Adams and Sheffield Hallam to enable development and reflection across different universities.

"We have been able to set up a system of reflection on the footage between our coaches and captains, allowing everyone to go through the footage to look at what we need to develop as a team structurally. As well as this, we are able to release the footage to the club for personal development, allowing our members to go through and review their own performance to set goals for themselves as individuals."

"As a club, we are immensely grateful for the generosity of our donors, which enabled us to acquire the tracking camera and bring this project to life. The camera has not only elevated our team's development but has provided invaluable hands-on experience with cutting edge technology. Through this project we have been able to hone our skills regarding technical proficiency, as well as evaluating gameplay which is paramount for development. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from those who have been involved. Thank you for supporting us in this project and helping us achieve our goals."

Ellie Fail, Keele's Women's Rugby Football Club Captain





Students funded to attend summer school programme at University of North Carolina

In the Summer of 2024, 12 students took part in a Humanities US Summer School at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW). This programme lasted for four weeks and involved several academic sessions, tours and recreational activities.

During academic sessions, the students engaged in discussions, group activities and presentations that enhanced their understanding of the topics centred on The American South. Excursions enriched the experience and included trips to the Bellamy Mansion Museum and a tour of Wilmington. There was also time for some recreational activities, with highlights being 4 July Independence Day celebrations in Wilmington and a Cape Fear river cruise.

Thanks to the generosity of Keele alumni donors, the school was able to heavily subsidise the costs to widening participation students who attended the Summer School in 2024 (on top of students' 'Turing' award scheme, which provides funding for students to undertake a study or work placement at partner institutions or organisations across the world). This will continue in 2025.

This was made possible through support from our alumni in the US who give to our Keele in the USA Fund, and particularly the E L Spencer Jr Foundation. An annual gift from Edward Lee Spencer (Fulbright Scholar, 1953-1954) supported this fund until his death in 2023 and this gift has been continued by his foundation.

Chiadikaobi Ihuoma, who acted as Pastoral Contact during the trip, said: "We wish to express our appreciation to alumni for generously supporting our participation in the summer school. We also thank the Humanities School at Keele, the vibrant staff of UNCW, the tour guides, and all those who participated in the summer school's planning. Their contributions made the summer school experience wonderful."

Student Ella Neild said of the trip: "I thoroughly enjoyed the US Summer School; I found the seminars engaging and Wilmington was a great place to explore with a vast history. The Summer School has prepared me for future study as I now have a better understanding of the culture and history of the US, and I would like to do further research into American Civil War history. The US Summer School allowed me to engage with a myriad of primary sources and now I am considering a future career in researching and writing about history. Learning onsite in the US made it easier to understand the history and culture of the South, through visiting a multitude of plantation houses and historical landmarks. I also enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Charleston and Myrtle Beach.

"I received the alumni bursary and Turing grant for the Summer School which was a great help as this covered my flight costs. I would suggest that receiving this grant for many people was a determining factor whether they participated in the school or not. The University of North Carolina Wilmington had a beautiful campus and had great facilities to use. I am grateful I had this opportunity and would recommend it."



Student telephone calls continue to make an impact

A team of 35 current students formed our annual telethon call team for 2024. There were over 860 conversations with alumni around the world over a three-week period in November and the comments we received after the calls are testament to how much alumni and students both valued this opportunity to learn from each other:

Alumni reflections following their conversations with students:

"I thoroughly enjoyed my 4 years at Keele from 1979 to 1983, and it was a pleasure to be able to share some memories of those days with the student I spoke to and to learn a little of her journey."

Stephanie Wuggenig (née Crevis), Psychology & Mathematics, Class of 1982

"Talking to you made me realise how very different university life is nowadays from when I was at Keele in the late 1960s! Things were a lot easier financially, so I am pleased to be able to help in some small way."

Chris Taylor, French & German, Class of 1971

"Thank you to the student I spoke to. I wish you all the best with your studies and keep up the good work. You are helping so many people to access funds that will enable them to stay in education and have a bright future. You should be so proud of yourself."

Tamika Wilson, Adult Nursing, Class of 2020

"Lovely to speak to you yesterday. I wanted to let you know that I was so impressed with your attitude and enthusiasm that I have just donated :) Make the most of your time at Keele - these really will be some of the best years of your life!"

Kim Jackson, Geography & Geology, Class of 1990

Student reflections:

"This experience has allowed me to come out of my comfort zone and evolve, and I thoroughly enjoyed speaking to all the different alumni every week. I managed to find out so much more about my future career than I ever thought I would, so I just wanted to say thank you."

Latesha-Precious Richards, 1st year student studying Business Management and Geography

"I have had the most incredible experience connecting with alumni and learning more about the wonders and history of Keele, it has felt so rewarding knowing how many generous people there are willing to help the less advantaged in our Keele community."

Jasmine Roshan, Foundation Year student studying Neuroscience and Psychology

"I love how much this job made me feel like I was part of something really important. Fundraising for a bigger cause feels really great!"

Erica Miller, 3rd year student studying Geology (Volcanology)

"I loved being a telephone fundraiser, that's why I came back to do it for a second year, you learn so much and gain so many skills. It's a perfect job for developing skills and insight."

Kush Modha, 2nd year student studying Computer Science



864
conversations



35
student callers



£117k
raised



1 in 4
alumni called decided to give

Keele to implement the University Mental Health Charter with help from alumni gifts

There has been great political, public and professional concern in recent years about student mental health, with mental wellbeing reported by university students among the lowest across the UK population.

The higher education sector has seen a dramatic rise in help-seeking, with some institutions reporting that one in four of their students are either being seen or are waiting to be seen by the university counselling service (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017). Whilst further research is required, experts have connected this to a range of academic, social and financial pressures.

With this knowledge, Keele University has signed up to the University Mental Health Charter and alumni gifts are helping fund this work.

Poor mental health has far-reaching effects on students and staff, with the University Mental Health Charter outlining the following statistics across the UK:

- **30% of students considered quitting university. Out of this group, more than a third cited mental health problems as the reason.**
- **Around 40% of students may meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition.**
- **60% of UK students say university life has a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.**
- **Close to 40% of students reported that their mental health and wellbeing had worsened since the start of the autumn 2021 term.**
- **According to the Office for National Statistics, there were 95 student suicides in England and Wales during the year leading up to 2017.**



Mental health is therefore a critical factor in student and staff retention and success. Universities, as a community setting, present an opportunity to change people's health outcomes for life. As well as responding to illness, we need to promote and improve the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the university community.

The University Mental Health Charter aims to support and encourage universities to achieve a whole-organisation approach to mental health and wellbeing. There is mounting evidence that achieving the principles outlined in the University Mental Health Charter framework will lead to improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes for staff and students, and a range of individual and organisational-level outcomes that we know are important to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Examples of outcomes include confidence to respond to mental health concerns, improved health behaviours, effective mental health services, and wide and cohesive networks of support.

As part of the programme, institutions must offer an environment and culture that reduces poor mental health and supports good mental health. The environment should help students to develop the insight, understanding, and skills to manage their own wellbeing.

The University Mental Health Charter helps students by:

- **Improving mental health support**
- **Creating a supportive environment**
- **Providing accessible services**
- **Developing skills**

- **Recognising excellence:** Recognising excellence in supporting student mental health.

Improved mental health outcomes can lead to a range of benefits for staff and students. For example, mental health outcomes have been linked to:

- Improved student recruitment, retention, satisfaction, progression, attainment and employability for students.
- Improved staff performance, reduced sickness absence, lower staff turnover and higher levels of creativity.

Implementing the charter is a university-wide effort. The Charter Programme is an institutional-level programme, and activities and events are open to any staff and students across the institution. As well as utilising existing staff resource, alumni donations have allowed for the creation of a project manager role to lead on the charter work.

With continued thanks for the regular support from all our scholarship and bursary donors, including;

Denise Coates
Foundation



Phil Soar



Felix Andrew
Student
Opportunity Fund,
supporting Article
26 Scholarships

MIS Computing,
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Britain campaign
and British Council,
supporting GREAT
Scholarships



Santander
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