

30 October 2021

Dear Students

I hope that by now you are settling down into University life and your studies in this academic year. Welcome back if you are continuing your studies, and a 'Hello and welcome' if you are a new student starting your University journey!

If you have not had the opportunity, I do invite you to watch my welcome video on the School website. You can find a link to this here:

<https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/medicine-health-and-social-care/allied-health-professions-public-health/allied-health-professions.aspx>

This year my welcome message included the invitation for you to construct a **personal testimony** of your experiences over the last year.

A few months ago, the School was commissioned by Health Education England to design an additional intervention to help support allied health professionals to transition into employment in the National Health Service. This is in the form of an e-learning programme that will be available across England through the NHS e-Learning for Health platform. We're really pleased to be able to provide this additional support as we recognise the impact of the pandemic on everyone's working and home lives. In this programme, we include some tools and techniques drawn from 'positive psychology', and the personal testimony is one of these which has evaluated well. Moreover, it's been found to be helpful in different situations, for example, in helping our academic staff to debrief some of their experiences of the pandemic.

Hence my invitation to you.

Please do find a quiet spot in which you can pause and reflect. Take a look back over the past year and think about some of the things you've achieved despite the disruption of the pandemic. Of course, both commencing or returning to your studies are significant achievements which you should acknowledge. You've engaged in very different forms of learning and developed new skills in information technology. Many of you will have grappled challenges at home, supporting friends and family.

In about 200–250 words, write down a personal testimony that summarises your experience of learning and life during the last year, highlighting what you are most proud of achieving under difficult circumstances.

The testimony will provide an opportunity to acknowledge both the difficulties you have faced, the impact these have had, and your personal strengths in coping with these. Although I do not want to dismiss some of the less positive impacts of the pandemic, it's important that we don't lose sight of what has been achieved.

Keep your personal testimony close by; refer to it if you feel you need a confidence boost. Importantly, do share this with your personal academic tutor if you feel able to. Discussion of your personal testimony will help identify strengths which you can consolidate, or some support for personal development that your tutor can direct you towards.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for a stimulating and successful academic year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CB', written in a cursive style.

Professor Christopher R. Burton  
Head of School