PROGRESS REPORT: BCBT2014 summer school

I am Samantha-Kaye Christie, a Jamaican Postgraduate student and STEM Research Assistant at Liverpool Hope University in The Faculty of Education. During my undergraduate years in Jamaica, I was introduced to the Barcelona Cognition, Brain and Technology Summer School by my Spanish Lecturer which she emphasized as "una oportunidad de toda una vida". Upon seeing this scholarship opportunity, I was delighted because the scope my interest focuses on brain plasticity, with a focus on persons who experience difficulties in cognitive processes. I observed that the topics during the summer school include the evolution of the brain and analyzing brain-body-environment systems, which are key areas of my forthcoming doctoral study on 'Improving Memory using Synesthesia'. Therefore, this experience was an appropriate foundation to enhance my research skills and knowledge base in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

My experience at the 2014 hosting of the BCBT summer school was unforgettable. It felt surreal because I had always sought an opportunity which would allow me to engage with research and theoretical debates at this level. Although I arrived 2 days after the proceedings commenced, I was not disadvantaged as my colleagues were very helpful and provided an overview of the information. However, for the remaining days that I attended, I received information which contributed to a greater understanding of brain functions. I was particularly happy with the session by Professor Randall Beer, who spoke about the importance of considering the relationship between the person and the environment in determining outcome. With a background in the social sciences, I was very appreciative of this session. The other sessions
were also quite interesting ranging from learning more about Area V1 to the debates surrounding
the terminology of functional connectivity to learning about ICub.

Regarding the project, I worked along with the group which assessed the impact of space upon
memory using the Oculus to create a virtual space. By being in such an environment, I was able
to learn more about methodological rigour and how to accurately administer memory
tests. Socially, I learnt about other cultures from my colleagues. It was a great experience meeting
new people and learning about their different fields of expertise. Of particular importance was
my first tutorial where I encountered the word 'Ubuntu'. With an inquisitive personality, I
researched this term and found that it represents an African proverb which states "I am because
we are". I quickly began to understand what this phrase meant through the actions of my group
members. I therefore want to use this medium to say a special thank you to supervisor Daniel
Pacheco and group members Iulia Comsa, Penny (Panagiota P.) and Monica Sanchez. They were
all great to work with and really demonstrated the true meaning of teamwork and by extension
"Ubuntu". I would definitely recommend the summer school to my colleagues in Jamaica as it
gives you the opportunity to engage with people who have years of rigorous experience and who
are motivated to make an invaluable contribution to the field of science.