A major contribution to Froebelian education has been led by Yordanka Valkanova at Canterbury Christ Church University, working with a team of colleagues who have given solid and sustained support. From 2011, with a supporting grant from the Froebel Trust, conferences addressing different aspect of Froebelian educational approaches have been organised. The cost of attending could be affordable for practitioners because of the grant. Each conference is evaluated which helps in organising those that follow. Typically the conferences are attended by practitioners, students, head teachers and managers, academics and a few parents. They come from a wide area, including Cambridgeshire, Kent, East Sussex, Medway, Greater London, Surrey, Oxfordshire, Edinburgh, Japan and the USA.

First conference (11th June 2011): a Froebelian exploration of outdoor play and learning

The conference venue was The Old Session House at Canterbury Christ Church University. Over 100 delegates attended. The topic was decided through the researches of Yordanka Valkanova networking and acting on feedback from practitioners in the Canterbury area. The conference highlighted a Froebelian approach and brought together academics, educators, students and social workers. There was a mix of keynote presentations and panel discussions. The topics of the conference included playing outdoors, spaces and places, risk and challenge, gardens and playgrounds in kindergarten theory and practice, some historical illustrations and learning in the outdoor environment. The first speaker was Professor Kevin Brehony from the University of Roehampton, who addressed the title Gardens and playgrounds in kindergarten theory and practice, some historical illustrations. Professor Trisha Maynard from Canterbury Christ Church University spoke on Exploring child-led learning in the outdoor environment. Helen Tovey, Principal Lecturer, University of Roehampton, gave her talk on Playing outdoors: spaces and places, risk and challenge. The conference Chair was Professor Tina Bruce CBE, University of Roehampton, who gave concluding remarks.
Froebelian conferences at Canterbury

The second conference (21st April 2012): Froebel, Te Whariki and the early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): developing curriculum frameworks for early childhood education and care

This conference, with approximately 100 delegates, was again in the Old Sessions House and took place on Froebel’s birthday. Delegates were invited to join the Friends of the Department of Childhood Studies. They would then receive regular electronic notices about departmental activities with invitations to departmental lectures and events. Here was the emergence of another network of Froebelians. The Dean of the Education Faculty Dr John Moss opened the conference which was chaired by Professor Tina Bruce. Professor Helen May (University of Otago) gave her keynote A retrospective rethink of the politics of national curricula: Te Whariki and the New Zealand story (1992–2012). This was followed by Professor Kevin Brehony’s keynote, Individual cultivation ‘through play, creative self-activity and spontaneous self-instruction’: Froebel’s kindergarten curriculum. In the afternoon Helen Tovey spoke to the title Froebel Today: Principles and Practice. The last speaker of the day was Professor Tricia David whose title was Power and pedagogy: an exploration of forms of control and their impact on children and ECEC professionals. Tina Bruce gave the concluding remarks.

The third conference (22nd June 2013): child observation and assessment: Froebel’s holistic approach

On this occasion the conference venue was Augustine House at Canterbury Christ Church University. Dr John Moss, the Dean of the faculty of Education welcomed the delegates. Professor Kevin Brehony (University of Roehampton) then spoke on The emergent sciences of the child, educational psychology and of education: Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori and beyond. Professor Tina Bruce (University of Roehampton) then spoke Observing children at play and the development of the whole child: A Froebelian view. Stella Louis then gave a keynote talk titled Observing Froebel’s Gifts and Occupations in a South African township kindergarten. In the afternoon Dr Alison Clarke (Open University) gave her keynote titled Ways of seeing: using the Mosaic approach to listen to young children’s perspectives. After group discussions led by Debbie Lynch, Polly Sharman and Margaret Murray (Kent County Council), Tina Bruce gave the concluding remarks.

In 2014 Canterbury Christ Church University hosted the International Froebel Society Conference (see Chapter 38).

The fourth conference (6th June 2015): the benefits of block play

The conference was over-subscribed with more than 130 delegates attending. Tina Bruce spoke to the title Block play, spatial and mathematical learning. Dr. Gina Gomez de la Cuesta then spoke about the use of Lego with the Autism Research Centre situated in the School of Clinical Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Cambridge. Her title was Using Lego to facilitate social interaction development in children and young people with autism spectrum disorders. The next speaker was Dr Lori Schneiders who is Assistant Professor at the University of Maine at Machias, USA. She is a specialist in school counselling. She gave her lecture on Integrating block play with children who have been abused. Deirdre Armstrong and Jacqueline Matthew then gave a joint lecture titled Block play: How a Froebelian approach can help in practice. This was followed by a talk from Veronica Shirky from Community Playthings. She is a graduate of the BA
Early Childhood Studies at the Canterbury Christ Church University. Her talk was about \textit{Blocks as a creative medium} and she spoke about the influence of Froebel on items that the Bruderhof Community create.

\textbf{Marjorie Ouvry: the Froebel courses moderator}

Because the Froebel courses at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Roehampton work so closely and positively together it was felt by the Chair of the Froebel Trust’s Education Committee, Professor Maurice Craft, that it would be helpful to appoint a Moderator so that the courses, although different and in culturally and physically different settings, would chime with each other. This has been a welcomed initiative and Marjorie Ouvry, who has undertaken this task, has taken the opportunity to reflect, analyse and critique Froebelian issues arising which have led to a continual growth in the quality of the courses. Marjorie Ouvry took the Froebel Certificate course in Aberdeen in the 1960s. Only students gaining distinction in their teacher training could do so, and the External Examiner, Alice Munroe was impressed with her practice. Before retiring Marjorie Ouvry was Head of the Rachel McMillan nursery school in Deptford. She is an active leader in \textit{BAECE: Early Education}. She has written on music and outdoor and physical learning.

\textbf{Evaluation of Froebel courses and conferences}

In 2015, a team of researchers from CCCU, led by Dr Sarah Christie, conducted an evaluation of Froebel courses as well as the conferences that The Froebel Trust had sponsored at Roehampton, Edinburgh and Canterbury Christ Church Universities (see Chapter 34).