

LATEST NEWS

IFCELS Re-connect

Yes, we are back after too long away. In the age of INTO, Kaplan and company, I know our avid readers and supporters around the world (at least the two or three people who always comment on this newsletter) must have been worried about our silence since January. What happened? The usual – too much work, too few staff, many, many students (never too many!).

So this is a very special issue which answers many of the most important questions of the day:

- How can I get a free lunch at SOAS?
- Why are Chinese students turning away from Business and Finance?
- How can I save money on IFCELS programmes?
- Is it true IFCELS has the best teachers?

Director's Teaching Prize: Congratulations Robin Kearney!

Once again the high quality of teaching in IFCELS has been recognised by the award of a share of the Director's Teaching prize to our colleague Robin Kearney for "encouraging an open and accepting environment where students can aid each other in gaining a deeper understanding of different cultures". Robin, who was presented with his prize at the Graduation ceremony in July, is featured in our staff profile for this edition (see below).

Got an offer? Accept straightaway and save!

For the first time ever ICC and FDPS offer holders will be able to save £500 on their tuition fees if they accept their offer and pay their deposit within 1 month of the date of the offer letter. This special promotion is valid between now and the end of May 2018. See the ICC and FDPS programme pages for more details

Interviews in 7 (yes, SEVEN) cities in China 2017-18

This year we will be running entrance tests and interview sessions in seven Chinese cities, our biggest number EVER. As well as the regular locations of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, we will be testing and interviewing in Chongqing, Shenzhen, Wuhan, and, for the first time, Zhengzhou. We are visiting agents in all the cities at the end of November and January to brief them on our programmes and give them time to promote the test. See the upcoming events schedule for full details.

And if you have a branch office we don't know about in one of the cities, let us know and we'll arrange a visit.

2016-17 Prizes

"ELAS enabled me to improve my Academic English, particularly essay writing and presentation skills, in preparation for post-graduate study at SOAS. The course gave me an opportunity to familiarise myself with the UK academic environment through independent study, critical thinking and reading and I enjoyed the lectures and the chance to discuss ideas with students from a variety of different perspectives and backgrounds."

Van Tho Nguyen



Pro-Director Deborah Johnston with the winner of this year's ELAS Bhasi Pannikar Progress

2016-17 Prizes (continued)



ICC Prize-winners Idriss and Zhuoran

We were delighted to welcome SOAS Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching), Professor Deborah Johnston, to our reception for IFCELS students in October. Deborah presented prizes to our 2016-17 winners. Here is a full list:

ICC Achievement: Zhuoran Wang

Now studying MA English and Scottish Literature at Edinburgh

ICC Progress: Idriss Irakoze

Now studying BA International Relations and Development Studies at SOAS

FDPS Achievement: Maria Ester Sgambato

Now studying MSc Development Studies at SOAS

FDPS Progress: Wenjin Gong

Now studying MA History of Art and Archaeology of East Asia at SOAS

ELAS Bhasi Pannikar Progress Prize: Van Tho Nguyen

Now studying Diploma in Asian Arts at SOAS

On the FDPS programme, prize-winner Maria Ester Sgambato had this to say:

"The FDPS programme has been an incredibly important step in my academic life. It helped me make a mature and informed decision on which master's to pursue, gain the abilities I needed to succeed in it, and made me confident that I could do so. It has truly been a special and unforgettable experience, and I will always carry the time I spent on it with me."

ICC Results and Progression*

We saw some impressive results on ICC with 102 students completing out of 109 starters. There were 21 Distinctions, 40 Merits and just 2 Fails.

Our ICC students applied to 45 different UK universities and received offers from 39. 35% of students received offers from all their UCAS choices and 43% received offers from all but one of their choices.

In the end 93 ICC students went on to 22 different universities. SOAS received 40 students and UCL was the next most popular, with 11 students progressing, then Westminster (6), City (5) and Goldsmiths and Durham (3 each). For a full and complete list, see www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels/ugfoundation/destinations.

**Details of FDPS results and progress will be in the next edition of IFCELS Connect.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Entrance Tests 2017-18

- London: monthly from 5 January 2018
- Guangzhou: late January 2018 (to be confirmed)
- Seoul: starting from February 2018

Further tests will take place in Wuhan, Zhengzhou, Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou in March / April 2018. See www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels/testdates for the latest information.



From all of us at IFCELS, we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to working with you in 2018.

STUDENT PROFILE

Yuxuan Liu, ICC student



Yuxuan is one of the growing number of foundation students from China who are looking at a wider range of degree subjects beyond the usual Business, Finance, Accounting and Economics. ICC is a great choice for students interested in the humanities as it offers optional modules in Literature, History, Media and Art. The programme's flexible structure means that students can combine any two of these subjects.

Tell us about your background.

I am from China and I graduated from high school in July 2016. At that time, I went into a university in China to study electrical engineering, but after six months' study, I found out that neither I liked it or I was suitable for it. I chose to go back to my real interest. Therefore, I came to the UK and plan to study English Literature in a UK university.

Why did you choose the ICC?

ICC Programme has ten modules provided, which is very unusual among all foundation programs. Because I would want to study English literature, World Literature module is a perfect and necessary choice for me. Also, SOAS is a warm and diverse environment.

What are you enjoying?

The courses are very interesting and include lots of knowledge from different aspects. In the World Art tutorial, I have the chance to visit various museums and study closely the real art work, which is very inspiring and irreplaceable. Lecturers are good at explaining complicated ideas and making the class a pleasant experience. Also, I receive a lot of support from my teachers about study skills and I learn a lot from my classmates who have different backgrounds.

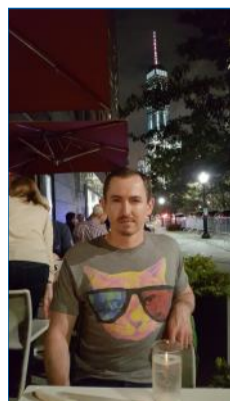
What you have found most difficult?

Time-management. It is very difficult for me to make a plan for the assignment. And I found that organising and scheduling my workload is also arduous.

STAFF PROFILE

Robin Kearney, EAP Teacher

I love teaching on the foundation programmes in IFCELS because I really get to engage with students from a range of cultures and backgrounds. I think of that diversity as an advantage, and try to encourage students to learn from each other's knowledge and personal experiences.



My classes are built around questions rather than dictating to students what they should do or think. This is not only because it builds critical thinking skills and independence, but also because it allows all students to participate according to their language level and capabilities. If the questions that are asked are motivating and the environment encouraging, I have found students are far more likely to improve their language and academic skills.

I've always been proud of the written feedback we receive from students at the end of the year, and also the high attendance rates and exam scores. But more than this, it's always fantastic to meet all of our former students who have continued onto degrees in SOAS and are having a really fulfilling and enjoyable time as part of the thrillingly diverse and exciting SOAS community.

AROUND SOAS

Hare Krishna at SOAS

They say there's no such thing as a free lunch ...but there is at SOAS (... donations are always welcome)



Six days a week at lunchtime, come rain or shine, term time or vacation, a Hare Krishna devotee pedals a tricycle specially fitted with a large food container from King's Cross to the SOAS campus, where they will stay until 2pm providing free vegetarian meals for 400- 500 people, mostly SOAS students. During term time the queue can stretch all the way along the side of the SOAS main building

So who are the Hare Krishnas and why do they offer the free food? The Hare Krishna movement was formalised in the 1960's but is based on Hindu beliefs which go back more than 600 years. Devotees advocate bhakti yoga and dedicate their thoughts and actions towards pleasing Krishna, one of the most popular Hindu Gods.

I talk to Prema Hare, Hare Krishna devotee on duty today, about why they give out the food. He tells me that the operation started with the 'Food for All' movement in India and he and his colleagues now provide free food at a number of locations in London, including Camden Town, Kentish Town, King's Cross, LSE Holborn campus and of course, SOAS. The food is cooked on an organic farm in Watford, NW of London, at a Hare Krishna Temple, a mansion given to the movement by Beatle lead guitarist George Harrison, himself a keen devotee. Food near its sell by date is also donated by supermarkets and much comes from individual donors. It is all carefully prepared according to Hare Krishna rules and is vegetarian, almost vegan; milk is allowed but not eggs. Often a variety of desserts such as cake or strawberries are also offered alongside the vegetable curry and rice.

I ask why they come to SOAS in particular and he says there is a good connection as SOAS studies Eastern religions and South Asia. I ask if there is a religious purpose to his visits; he says that they never directly ask students to join their movement. They are however interested in helping out all students on a tight budget in a friendly and supportive way. As I talk to Prema, some SOAS students join in, expressing how much they appreciate the food and the efforts of the devotees in bringing it to SOAS. One, Hugo, feels that Hare Krishna is giving out food to start a new model for human behaviour which others will gradually join. Another, Carol, tells how much the Hare Krishnas mean to her as they feed the homeless and support demonstrations around London, at the end of which they re-energise her with free food.

Shahin, a friend of Prema, explains how the food undergoes a kind of blessing (a 'puja') before it travels to London. Those who eat it, he says, are eating the 'energy of the Gods', and so at some point in the future, perhaps in a future life, they will continue their connection with Hare Krishna. Whatever your views of religion, or of the Hare Krishna movement, there is no doubt their presence at SOAS is interesting, colourful and much appreciated by the students from UK and abroad, who patiently queue for their carefully prepared, tasty and nutritious food.



Interviews and original text by Neil Robbie with additional information from Wikipedia.

STAFF VISITS

Graham Davies

- Wuhan, Zhengzhou, Shenzhen and Guangzhou: January 2018

See www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels/visits for up-to-date information on our next staff visits.

A special thanks to our contributors Robin Kearney, Neil Robbie and Yuxuan Liu who helped put this issue of IFCELS Connect together.

The next edition of IFCELS Connect will be published in February 2018. If you are not on the mailing list and would like to be, please email us at ifcels@soas.ac.uk