

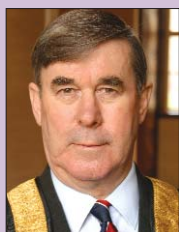


# London Connection

www.londonexternal.ac.uk

Issue 1: Autumn 2005

## Welcome to the first edition of the University of London External Programme alumni newsletter



A message from Sir Graeme Davis, Vice-Chancellor, University of London.

I am delighted to introduce the first newsletter to

graduates and alumni of the External Programme. I know that my colleagues in the External Programme are keen to develop our relationships with our alumni and I hope that you will be able to contribute to that community by keeping in touch with us and other alumni.

The aim of this newsletter is to ensure that you are kept up to date with developments in the University of London and the External Programme and we will feature topical news items in each edition. We would also like your comments and advice about what you might like to see in future editions, in addition to your thoughts about what being an alumnus of the University of London means to you.

The University of London remains committed to the international outlook of the External Programme and I wish you continued success in whatever direction your life has taken since your graduation.

*Graeme Davis*

## The Chancellor praises External Programme graduates

At this year's graduation ceremony HRH The Princess Royal, Chancellor of the University of London, congratulated External students for their special achievement. Below is an excerpt from her speech.



Photo: Ede & Ravenscroft

HRH The Princess Royal greets students backstage at the External Programme graduation ceremony, Barbican Centre, March 2005.

“The University is immensely proud of its External students. It is proud of your achievement, dedication, tenacity and fortitude.

The University recognises that being an External student is not an easy option. We know your presence here today represents a long and sustained commitment to a programme of study, often carried out under very difficult circumstances. You may have remained in full-time work while studying. You may have had a family or other dependants to look after. You may even have studied completely by yourself with little or no tutored support.

We know it can be very difficult indeed, so we feel especially proud that you are here with us today and are about to become a graduate of the University.

In fact, we should like to congratulate you twice: firstly, for your hard work and achievement as a graduate of the University of London, but secondly for achieving graduation as an External student, that is, without the support of the study environment from which the internal students of the Colleges undoubtedly benefit.”

**Graduation stories continue on page 3.**

## London is top of the league

University of London Colleges took five of the top 10 places in the latest university league table published in *The Guardian* newspaper this May.

The university league table assesses teaching quality, staff-student ratios and graduate job prospects.

In third place is Imperial College London, followed by the School of Oriental and African Studies, The London School of Economics and Political Science, King's College London and University College London.

## Inside this first issue

- Bridging the gap: using university connections to make new friends through alumni groups
- From Bangladesh to the Barbican: the 2005 graduation ceremony
- Beating expectations: the new Postgraduate Laws programme
- An alumnus 'down under'
- Postgraduate focus: the MBA
- The cutting edge: latest research news from the University of London

# Using university connections to make new friends

Finishing a degree brings a sense of satisfaction and relief that is often tinged with sadness as many graduates miss the buzz of study and contact with fellow students. Joining an alumni group can help to bridge the gap.

The 20 Colleges and Institutes of the University of London have hundreds of alumni groups. Whether they finished studying recently or graduated decades ago, former students enjoy meeting up to revive memories of shared experiences and talk to like-minded people.

Of course, it is different for distance learning students. Many of you will have used the Student to Student Network for vital support but may never have had face to face contact with another student on your course. You lived at home, not in university accommodation. And you were busy working or looking after your family, rather than enjoying nights out with friends. But alumni groups can still offer important benefits for External Programme graduates.

"For distance learning students, an alumni group could help to compensate for the lack of social contact during their studies," says Rachael Corver, alumni officer at King's College London.

"Traditionally groups are structured either around a course or, for overseas students, they focus on a particular country or region," she explains. "Professional development and networking plays an important role for many of our subject groups. Lawyers, for example, enjoy making contacts at alumni events. In other groups, alumni take part purely for the social element of meeting people with similar skills sets."

Examples of activities could include:

- Organising social events – annual dinners, receptions, parties.
- Producing a newsletter or website.
- Professional networking – organising business breakfasts or lunches, lectures with guest speakers, producing a directory of members.

The organisation of the External Programme means that alumni groups in specific countries could be set up. These would offer students from different courses, but with a similar experience of independent study, the chance to get together. Some courses supported by local institutions – such as business programmes at Singapore Institute of Management – will be ideally suited to setting up alumni groups, as former students in similar subject areas will be concentrated in a particular region.

If you are interested in starting up an alumni group, here is some advice from King's College:

- Identify a core group of three or four 'activists' – people who are prepared to devote time and energy to making the group successful.
- Ask these key people to commit themselves to the group for a minimum of one year and maximum of three years.
- Plan your first year of activities.

- To help organise events alumni groups often have a committee structure with a President, Vice-President, Social Secretary, Treasurer and other posts.

Rachael Corver says that there is a great deal of flexibility in what alumni groups can offer: "Some are quite formal groups who organise dinners and receptions. Others are more relaxed with regular pub quizzes and outings. It depends largely on the personal style of the people involved. Whatever the group decides to do, there are usually invaluable professional and social benefits for all the members."

If you would like to find out more about setting up an alumni group, please contact the Alumni Office, email: [external.alumni@lon.ac.uk](mailto:external.alumni@lon.ac.uk)

Or if you already have an alumni group up and running, please send us details of events – past and future – for us to feature in London Connection. ✉



Photo: Getty Images

## New postgraduate programmes to be launched in 2006



### MA Citizenship/History Education

The **Institute of Education's** new MA in Citizenship/ History Education will fulfil a valuable dual purpose – both responding to recent curriculum developments and offering teachers, education administrators and others a graduate programme that relates directly to their professional needs. ✉

For further information please visit:

🌐: [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/education](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/education)

### MSc in Clinical Trials

The **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine** has been awarded a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a new MSc in Clinical Trials. The new programme will be made available to distance learning students in the first instance. ✉

🌐: [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/health](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/health)



Photo: Anne Koerber



# The 2005 External Programme graduation ceremony: Celebrating hard work, determination and stamina



For many students the graduation ceremony is the culmination of their hard work. The chance to walk across a London stage and enjoy the public recognition of their academic achievement inspires them to travel thousands of miles – from Asia, North America and Europe – to the Barbican Centre in London.

Over 400 students attended this year's ceremony held on 4th March in the presence of the Princess Royal who is Chancellor of the University of London. Whether accompanied by guests or alone, every single student received a warm round of applause from the audience.

"Everybody in the hall – graduates, families and friends – understands what sort of achievement it is to study at a distance," says Sarah Goddard at the University of London who organises the annual event. "It's not like other ceremonies which can be rigid and formal. This one has a real celebratory feel to it."

"For many students it will be the first time they have met other people from their course. They sit together in the hall and

usually have lively discussions afterwards at the refreshments when they can also meet the academic staff."

As some results for Masters programmes are not ready until the new year, the graduation ceremony is always held in February or March so that all External Programme graduates can be invited.

Distance is no barrier to attending. Over 300 of the 436 graduates attending this year came from overseas, many travelling from countries as distant as Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Pakistan.

"Overseas students often use the ceremony as an opportunity to come over and visit London for a few days," says Sarah.

Although the Princess Royal has presided for the last two years, her attendance cannot be confirmed at the 2006 ceremony yet due to her busy schedule of royal duties.

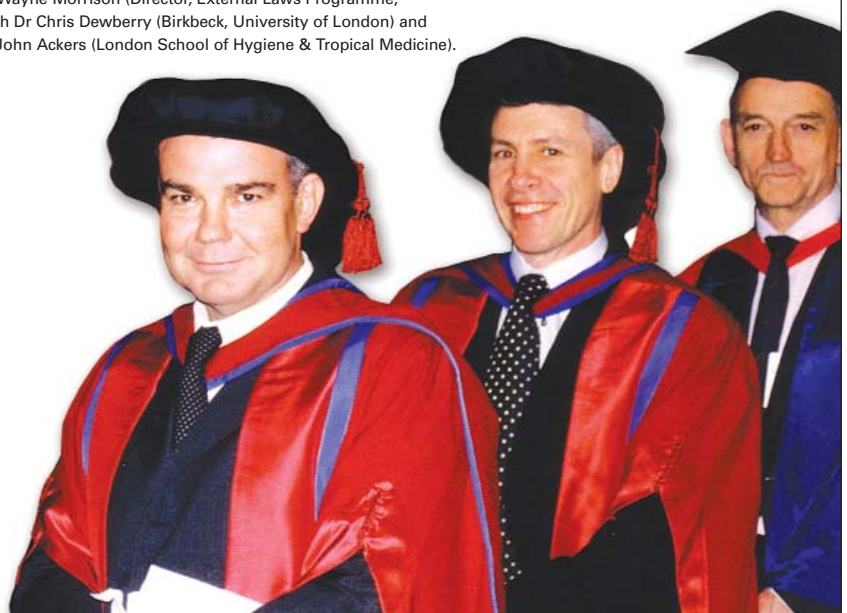
But the event is always well-attended by the academics responsible for creating and directing the External Programme courses. And this year a member of staff received the loudest applause.

Sarah explains: "Our Laws programme director Wayne Morrison, who had been congratulating the LLB and LLM graduates, had to quickly change his robes to be presented as a Doctor of Laws. He received a standing ovation as students could relate to his desire to keep on studying."

If you are graduating this year, look out for your invitation pack which will arrive with your examination results and take the opportunity to celebrate your success in style. ✉

Next year's ceremony will take place on Monday 13 March 2006 at the Barbican Centre in London.

Below: Dr Wayne Morrison (Director, External Laws Programme, far left) with Dr Chris Dewberry (Birkbeck, University of London) and Professor John Ackers (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine).



Photos: Antonia Steadman

## Key facts about the University of London

- Through its External System, University of London degrees have been accessible to students worldwide since 1858.
- Studying at a distance allows you a high degree of flexibility. Generally, you can study whenever, wherever and however you choose.
- Today we have over 34,000 students in over 180 countries.
- Examinations are held in centres in over 140 countries worldwide as well as in London.
- A global Student to Student Network (an online student database) can be used for mutual support.
- Over 100 programmes are available for study as well as a wide range of short courses for personal and professional development. ✉



Photo: Gavin Jones

# New improved Postgraduate Laws programme (LLM) takes off

🌐 [www.lon.ac.uk/llmexternal](http://www.lon.ac.uk/llmexternal)

The launch of the revamped and upgraded LLM programme has sparked a huge response from distance learning students around the world.

"The new LLM is completely blowing away our expectations," says Programme Director, Dr James Busuttil. "Every week we receive calls and emails from hundreds of students asking for our brochure. We are expecting more than 500 students to start this year – our original target was just 300."

For the first time, both graduates and non-graduates alike will be eligible to enrol on a postgraduate law programme.

Access, flexibility and quality are key to the new LLM's success, says Dr Busuttil. It has been carefully tailored to the diverse needs of distance learning students, allowing people from a wide variety of backgrounds – including professionals in IT, finance, banking and accountancy as well as practising lawyers – to gain a high level of legal expertise.

Dr Busuttil explains: "Our aim is to open up postgraduate law to everyone who has the potential. Non-graduates can apply if they have at least five years' relevant work experience. Graduates who have degrees in any other subject will be accepted automatically onto the course. And the LLM will also attract students who have an LLB but want to develop their knowledge and skills."

He adds: "The progression route from Postgraduate Certificate to Postgraduate Diploma to LLM means that students can join at different stages, depending on their qualifications and expertise."

Recognising that family, work and social commitments all impact on distance learning students' lives, the new LLM offers more flexibility than ever before. Students can choose how and when they study, as long as they complete their degree within five years. There is also a much greater range of choice. By March 2006 there will be more than 40 courses – embracing subjects as diverse as 'Intellectual property on the internet' and 'International environmental law' – leading to 29 specialisation routes. Flexibility to pay as you go is an added attraction.

Law experts at Queen Mary, University of London and University College London have designed the LLM. Both colleges have the top 5\* rating for their research activities and are widely respected within the legal profession.

"Distance learning students have to be able to show employers they have a quality degree," says Dr Busuttil. "Our law faculties have examined all aspects of the programme

and brought in outside experts to review materials, ensuring that their content is right and that they are suitable for distance learning students."

Textbooks and study guides are complemented by learning materials on the web and an e-campus comprising an online library, legal databases and discussion forums.

Previously, many External Programme LLM students have come from countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, the UK, Malaysia and North America where the LLB is already popular. But the new LLM is set to attract an even more diverse student body. 📧

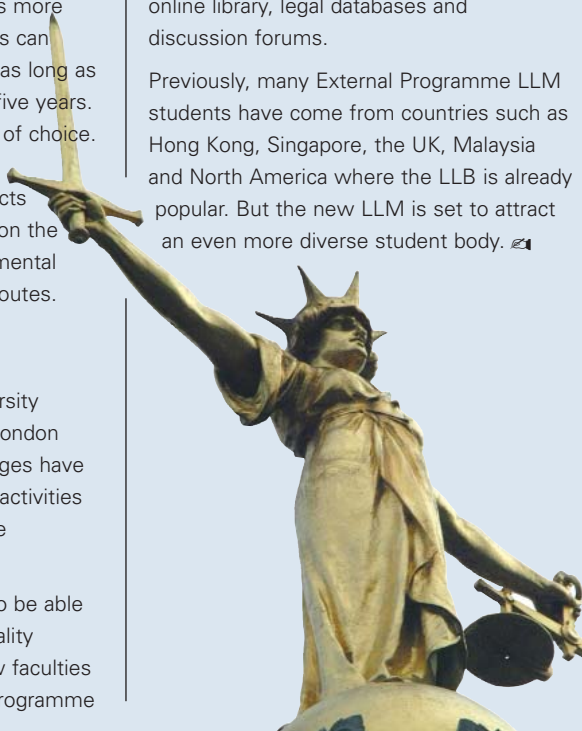


Photo: Ian Britton

## Australian MP graduates in Law

Paul Pearce, an MP in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, has praised the 'very high quality' of the External Programme's LLB programme.

Joining the ranks of eminent External Programme alumni who are spread around the world, Mr Pearce attended the graduation ceremony on 4 March 2005.

In an interview after the ceremony, the Australian member for Coogee, an area in eastern Sydney, commented that the LLB is 'rigorous and well structured'.

"The course went very smoothly. Whenever I sought information on any aspect of the course, it was supplied promptly," he said. "I'm a member of the council of the University of New South Wales, so I found the whole experience very interesting as we don't have a good distance learning system in Australia yet."

He concluded that: "The access to information and study guides and the response from the admin staff were all excellent."

Mr Pearce, who lists his political interests as the environment, social justice and housing, also has an MA from the University of Sydney. 📧



Photo: Getty Images

## Developing new postgraduate programmes

We want to make sure that in the future we develop new postgraduate programmes which are likely to meet the needs of External Programme graduates. Many of you will therefore have received from us an email inviting you to take part in an online survey to find out more about your needs.

This is part of a research project we are undertaking to find out more about future needs of postgraduate and undergraduate students. We would like to thank all who took part in the survey and we will be feeding back on the findings in the next issue of this newsletter. 📧



## Postgraduate focus: the MBA

The External Programme's highly regarded MBA enables experienced professionals in business and management to progress their careers.

### Key benefits:

- Study materials are designed by experts in the field of commerce from the Tanaka Business School at Imperial College London.
- Access to an Online Learning Environment allows you to interact with fellow students and tutors.
- Students have between two to five years to complete the MBA.
- You can pay fees entirely in advance (£12,500 for 2005-2006 academic year) or pay as you go.

### Academic direction:

Imperial College London is one of the largest constituent colleges of the University of London and has an outstanding international reputation for teaching and research.

The Tanaka Business School currently has more than 550 students on postgraduate courses, including 450 students on MBA programmes. The quality of teaching at The Business School was recognised by the Higher Education Funding Council of England when it was awarded the highest category of 'Excellent', and its research standing was confirmed by the award of a '5' rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

### Programme structure:

You study nine modules (seven core modules, plus either one specialisation or two electives plus a compulsory research project).

The seven core modules focus on the principle areas of management. You can then choose to specialise in entrepreneurship, customer-focused strategy or investment and risk.

The 'study year' is effectively between September and April, with examinations in May.

### Study support:

There are two opportunities for receiving support from tutors during your study: the online learning environment (OLE) and tutor-marked assignments. Whilst students are encouraged to take advantage of both means of learning support, each pathway has been designed to ensure that all students are able to benefit from tutorial assistance.

For further information on the MBA and the wide range of External Programme postgraduate programmes:

📞: [www.londonexternal.ac.uk](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk)

**Next issue's postgraduate focus:** the MBA in International Management. 📧

## Careers advice on the web

Whether you're looking for your first job or aiming to progress your career after several years' experience, the Prospects website provides up to date and practical advice for all graduates.

In addition to useful job hunting tips, the website includes sections on different job sectors and communities e.g. Banking and Finance, retail and leisure, and allows you to explore job opportunities around the world.

For graduates in the EEA (European Economic Area) seeking jobs or further study in the UK, there is also a web-based career development service. This allows you to:

- Email a careers consultant: a careers advice via email service staffed by professional careers consultants.
- Have your CV checked
- Test Yourself: aims to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses; know what job you have the skills for, as well as an opportunity to check out a wide range of online personality and skills assessments, and aptitude tests.
- Talk to graduates online
- Chat live to employers and postgraduate study experts.



📞: [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

Prospects also runs a complementary website, The Law Careers Advice Network, which aims to promote and enhance understanding about the opportunities available to those who wish to pursue a career in law. 📧



📞: [www.lcan.org.uk](http://www.lcan.org.uk)

## Calling alumni in Malaysia

The UK Alumni Network (UKAN) is an initiative of the British Council and the British High Commission in Malaysia. The web-based portal is aimed at helping Malaysians with UK qualifications keep in touch with one another.

The benefits include access to information on various aspects of the UK, such as science and technology, education, arts and culture etc, special discounts and invitations to events and activities organised in Malaysia.

When you register as a member, you will

have access to chat and forum facilities as well, and members are free to send in their comments or ideas on the website.

Membership is free and available to anyone with a UK qualification at advanced diploma level or above. Members will also be eligible to join the Job Club, an employment avenue established by the British Council to help Malaysians with UK qualifications secure employment in the country in a faster and more efficient manner. For further details/to register as a member, please visit:

📞: [www.ukan.org.my](http://www.ukan.org.my)



# Around the London Colleges

Major scientific discoveries and investigations into social, political and economic issues ensure that academics at the University of London are widely regarded as world-leaders in research.

[www.kcl.ac.uk](http://www.kcl.ac.uk)

## Thai curry ingredient has anti-cancer properties

Researchers working at **King's College London** have discovered that the ginger-like root, galangal, which is used to flavour Thai curries, has potential anti-cancer properties.


The King's team found that galangal extracts could kill cancer cells as well as increasing the ability of normal cells to protect themselves from carcinogens. Greater galangal has been used traditionally in Indo-China and the Malay Peninsula, against cancer of the stomach. 



Photo: Sarah Bromley

## Equality on the internet

According to a new study by **LSE** researchers Sonia Livingstone and Magdalena Bober, many parents lack the skills needed to guide and support their children's internet use. However, it also demonstrated that internet-literate parents have internet-literate children.


Professor Livingstone said: 'Now that many young people rely on the internet for information, homework help and careers guidance, the more it matters that some of them are getting left behind.' 




Photo: Getty Images

[www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk)

## Adults can be retrained to learn second languages more easily, says UCL scientist


Our ability to hear and understand a second language becomes more and more difficult with age, but the adult brain can be retrained to pick up foreign sounds more easily again, says Dr Paul Iverson of the **UCL** Centre for Human Communication.

Scientists now believe that the difficulties are caused by our experience which teaches us to ignore certain sounds so that we are able to give our full attention to the sounds that (in our native language) matter most to understanding a sentence.

Dr Iverson said: "Adults see things through the lens of our native language and that 'warps' the way we see foreign languages. Through training, we can essentially change our 'perceptual warping' to make second-language learning easier." 

[www.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ucl.ac.uk)

## Fungi fight malaria

Scientists have discovered an unlikely ally in the fight against malaria. Infecting mosquitoes with fungi can drastically reduce transmission of the disease, surprising new research from **Imperial College London** and the University of Edinburgh reveals. Their study suggests that infecting mosquitoes with fungi while they digest human blood could help to significantly curb the disease that claims at least a million lives each year. 


[www.imperial.ac.uk](http://www.imperial.ac.uk)



Killing blood-fed mosquitoes with a fungus  
Top: freshly fed *Anopheles*, Middle: mosquito killed by fungus 12 hours earlier, Bottom: mosquito killed by fungus 24 hours.

## The secret of a big movie – get people talking before it opens

The final Star Wars film, *Revenge of the Sith*, scored the most successful film opening in UK cinema history, making £14m in four days.

A study by Dr David Lane at **LSE** suggests that the secret of earning movie millions in such a short time depends on pre-publicity and word-of-mouth recommendations before release rather than on the quality of the film itself. 

[www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk)

## New technology works against bird flu

A form of air purification technology has been shown to have a drastic effect on the activity of avian flu.

John Oxford, Professor of Virology at **Queen Mary** and Director of Retroscreen Virology Ltd, a spin-out company, has demonstrated how 'Plasmacluster Ions' can reduce activity of the highly fatal and highly pathogenic airborne avian influenza virus, or bird flu, by 99 per cent.

Since 1997, avian influenza has taken a tremendous toll on poultry in Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea and Japan. And in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, 97 patient cases (including 53 deaths) have confirmed it can be transmitted to humans. 

[www.qmw.ac.uk](http://www.qmw.ac.uk)

## We greatly value your feedback...

...and would welcome your comments about this first issue of the newsletter and what you might like to see in future issues. We would also be delighted to receive your letters and any news items relating to your study with the University of London External Programme for future publication. Please email us at: [newsletter@lon.ac.uk](mailto:newsletter@lon.ac.uk)