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ST GEORGE'S
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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The difference you have made

Impact Report 2024



Dear Alumni and friends,

Once again, I am very pleased to introduce you to our 2024 Impact Report. In the following pages, you will find stories outlining what your considerable generosity is allowing our students to achieve.

As always, these stories outline how important you are in helping us make sure that financial hardship never gets in the way of a student's education. And as before, this report will also show you the bigger picture: where our students come from, how they arrive here, the motivations behind their subject choices, and, most importantly of all, where they are bound and what they hope to achieve. The impact of your support is much more than ensuring that students graduate. It is giving every one of them the opportunity to go out into the wider world and make a difference.

These stories are powerful and moving. Many of you contribute to City Cares, and the importance of their work is highlighted by the experience of Diego, (page 4) an estranged student cast adrift from family and left completely to his own devices. In his case, just getting to university was an extraordinary achievement. Yet it is your support that is ensuring Diego gets to remain here and pursue his dreams. As I have remarked before, a university education remains the most transformative life-choice that a young person can make.

It is also pleasing to see some of our overseas students represented in this report (page 10). Pursuing a degree far away from home and family is an exciting yet daunting challenge. With over 30% of our student body coming from outside of the UK, it is vital that we are there to help when life and events threaten to derail a degree.

We are now, of course, City St George's, University of London, a substantially larger, more capable, more interdisciplinary and more impactful institution than before. And with this exciting change, an even greater number of our students will benefit from your ongoing generosity. Two of our current nursing students share their journeys (page 16) into the health profession, and tell us what they think of the merger.

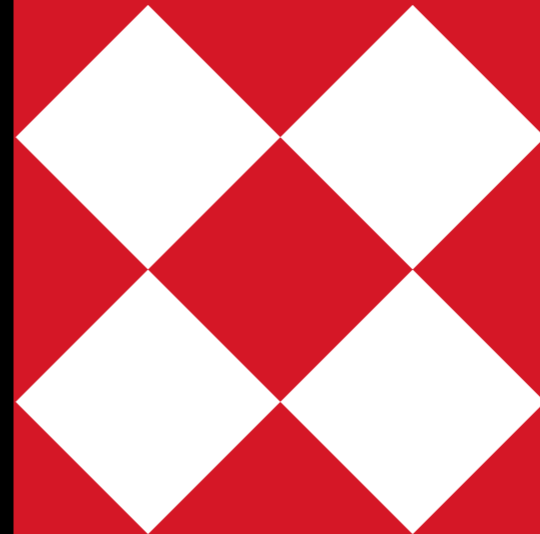
Whichever way you chose to support City St George's, whether with a donation, or if you choose to give back by other means, such as signing up to be a mentor in our award-winning Professional Mentoring Scheme, rest assured that you are making a significant difference. As always, please accept my heartfelt gratitude for your continuing support and enabling of such important work. Over and over again, your generosity helps us to transform the lives of our students. Thank you so much!

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein
President, City St George's,
University of London



Your impact in 2024



£1.3M

in gifts and pledges to the University



228

mentors coupled up with students



58%

You were one of the generous 58% who said 'yes' when asked to make a donation



24

Age of our youngest donor



94

Age of our oldest donor



879

Student Support awards, helping students who are struggling financially



100%

increase in students registering for support from City Cares



670

alumni and supporters made a donation

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to the University. To all our donors, supporters, friends, mentors and ambassadors, thank you for your generosity throughout the last year.

You care, City cares

Our dedicated support network for Care-experienced Students, Estranged Students, Young Adult Carers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Thanks to your generous donations, City Cares continues to offer a full range of support to care-experienced students, allowing them to navigate the ups and downs of university life.

As many of you already know, financial support is just one vital element of what our care-experienced students require. Essential pastoral and educational support, advice on accommodation and priority access to counselling are also at the core of our work.

From the very first day that these young people arrive at City St George's, and throughout the long and challenging journey to the life-changing goal of graduation, City Cares will accompany them each step of the way.

Difficult beginnings and circumstances must never define a young person's future.



In this report, certain names have been changed and stock photographs have been used to protect the identity of the students.

Uncertainty, upheaval and our estranged students

It goes without saying that young people who have grown up in care invariably face much greater struggles in realising their full potential. This is why we have made them a priority at City St George's. But another category of students, those estranged from their families, also encounter difficulties and upheavals that can be sudden, debilitating and seemingly insurmountable.

Indeed, those students who are estranged have no communicative relationship with either of their living biological parents and often their wider family networks as well. This could be because of abuse, forced marriage or family rejection. And because estranged students do not have the same legal protections as care leavers, with local authorities having no statutory responsibility for their welfare, undertaking a degree at university can be an enormous challenge.

As Alice Myers, our City Cares Adviser, says: "Estranged students, who miss out on extra support offered by social care by law for care leavers, often fall down and get lost in the cracks of society. Here at City Cares, we are working incredibly hard to change that. Our outreach work is letting these vulnerable students know that there is financial and pastoral support available to them. And it's your extra support and generous donations that are allowing us to reach more and more of these young people who would otherwise be left to fend for themselves."

Diego's story encapsulates how a student can become estranged and the challenges that they often face. And how, with your help, they are able to overcome those challenges and go on to graduate.

We are truly grateful to all our donors whose contributions help City Cares go the extra mile. In the year ahead City Cares will be supporting record numbers of vulnerable students, as we have had a 100% increase in student registrations to our service.

Diego's story



Diego is now in the final year of an Investment and Financial Risk Management degree and is excited and optimistic about the future. This was certainly not the case when he embarked upon his degree.

As an estranged student, his journey to Bayes Business School has proved to be both difficult and demanding. Diego tells us about this journey in his own words.

"I am classed as an estranged student because I come from an abusive household. Even before I came out as gay, I was the black sheep of my family, given curfews and never allowed any freedom. I was constantly finding myself in trouble and for the first 14 years of my life, I was abused emotionally and physically.

"At the age of 16, even if I wanted to remain at college after classes finished, I was not trusted to stay out. There would have been speculations over my whereabouts and activities, even if all I was doing was studying. And whilst my siblings could stay out for as long as they liked, I wasn't allowed to. I knew that I needed to leave and make my own way in life.

"This was absolutely the right decision. But it still caused painful difficulties and hardship. I found myself homeless between A levels and university, at first relying upon friends and couch-surfing, and then eventually having to turn to a homeless shelter for accommodation.

"It's not just about being homeless, though. It's also about having the money to pay for food. Living off just three biscuits a day and drinking only water really took a toll on my health.

"When I started at City, I had little money and continued to go hungry in order to be able to afford to travel to class. My thinking was that 'I've survived worse'. My zero-hour contract didn't go very far.

"Further to this, finding the right place to live was so tricky. One flat that I moved into at the beginning of my second year, seemed ideal at first, but I quickly realised there was a problem. It was an exact copy of the layout of the house of my parents and this brought back frightening and unhappy memories. I couldn't even bear to move around the house, returning and retreating immediately to my room. I needed to move out."

Learning about the help that City Cares could provide to estranged students – indeed, that he was in fact an estranged student – gave Diego the breathing space and help to resolve many of his difficulties.

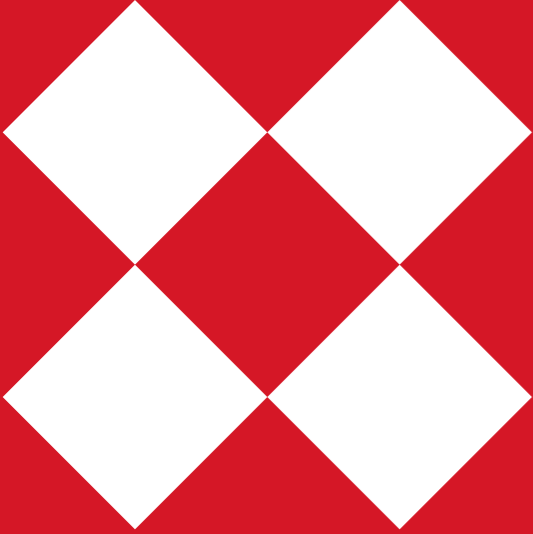
"An award from City Cares really helped me focus and throw myself completely into my studies, also giving me the space to find a more suitable home. The extra money allowed me to eat three meals a day. You can't really study and fulfil your potential if you're not eating right. I've also benefited from some of the counselling that is a priority for City Cares students. I've been diagnosed with ADHD and am currently waiting to see what can be done about this. Honestly, I don't feel that I'd be able to do any of this without this help."

As always, a degree at university is as much about the future as it is about the present. And Diego feels ready to face that future.

"Medium term, I really want to make a career in Finance. My dream role would be working in asset or risk management for a large firm, to show that I won't let my background and struggle dictate my future.

"Short term, I'm eager to try and secure a graduate scheme. I was looking for a summer internship and have just missed out on securing one in my field. I really want to get my foothold into the financial sector, though, and gain the necessary experience there and thrive. Because I'm BAME and raised in the UK, being a student always seems like such a luxury. But having access to these funds has allowed me to shift my focus from trying to live to see another day, and instead concentrate completely on my education. This change in focus has allowed me to see a future for myself. The worst has passed and the best is yet to come.

"I'd like to say a big thank you to City St George's, and all of the donors who support City Cares. The difference that I feel now to the start of my degree, feels like the difference between life and death. Being able to just be a normal university student like everyone else has shown me a future I wouldn't have otherwise even known I could have, let alone finding myself aiming high and for greater things. And all thanks to this amazing funding."



Student Support

Enabling the present and changing the future

Because of your generosity, Student Support and the Hardship Fund are available all year round, ready to pick up the financial strain on students who, for a variety of reasons, are struggling.

Over 1,250 of you have made donations to Student Support over the last decade.

We are thankful to every one of you. Your support enables our students to complete their degrees, graduate and then go out into the wider world and make a difference.

You have provided grants to students experiencing financial hardship and given them the breathing space to pay rent, bills, food and travel costs. All of those students have benefitted from you and your unceasing generosity.

Here are two stories illustrating why your support matters, and why studying at university is still one of the most important and valuable decisions that a young person can make.



Simran's story

Simran is putting the finishing touches to a part-time Master's degree in Organisational Psychology. Although psychology was always the direction that she was headed, it was only in the final year of an undergraduate degree, that she found her specific calling. Simran picks up her story:

"I had begun to read the work of Dr Paul Flaxman - a lecturer and researcher at City - and because of his research on 'mindfulness', I had this 'WOW' moment when I knew that this was exactly what I wanted to do. That there was a whole module at City dedicated to the area of mindfulness, directed by Dr Flaxman, swung it. That he's actually supervising my dissertation right now shows that it was the perfect choice."

Simran loved the course and was excelling. But, as with all of our student support stories, circumstances threatened to derail her.

"As someone with Complex PTSD, my mental health hit a real trough. And balancing my studies, alongside one of my part-time roles as a Crisis support worker, meant that I found myself utterly burnt out. Crisis noticed the pressure that I was under and didn't think I was strong enough to be there, so I was signed off sick. But this left me under severe financial strains to pay bills and living costs, maxing out my overdraft and ending up in debt.

"I still wanted to persevere with my studies, despite the financial turmoil. Student Support, with your help, was there to provide the emergency grant. Essentially, without the amazing award, I would have had to stop studying. The award gave me the space to care for myself and carry on with my degree."

And what next for Simran?

"In the immediate future, I want to get back and keep up with my voluntary work. I work a lot with the homeless, and also because it is central to who I am, I also work with LGBT organisations. The core impetus of this voluntary work, creating a space for whoever you are and however you identify, is something that really matters to me.

"And in the longer term, I aim to start a PhD. This will allow me to pursue bigger dreams. I feel I can have a positive impact on lots of people, hence the move away from Clinical Psychology to Organisational Psychology. I feel that I've got really important things to say, and want to start a consultancy that concentrates on the area of wellbeing in the workplace. I mean, the proportion of time that people spend in the workplace means that it is so important to be happy there, no?"



Rosie's story

Rosie is in the second year of a Computer Science degree and enjoying it immensely. However, during her first year, her finances were placed under pressure when her out-of-date laptop began to negatively impact her studies. Rosie tells us all about this, and also outlines her motivations and ambitions in the world of computing:

"I've always loved computers and computer science. And although I got knocked back at first from doing Computer Science by a careers advisor at school, my excellent results at GCSE Computer Science inspired me to carry on. An exceptional A Level result followed and justified that perseverance.

"Regarding City, this was also an obvious choice. It had to be a London university, as I come from quite a poor family and need to study near home, as I couldn't afford expensive rents.

"But problems began quite early in the degree when my out-of-date and really slow laptop proved inadequate for the intensive programming required by my course. I knew help was available from student hardship, but I thought that you had to purchase the necessary laptop yourself, and then try to claim the money back. I didn't even have the funds to do that, though. So it became a real panic. On finding out that this wasn't the case, and the money would be there after an application, I applied and was successful.

"What a difference it made. I was able to program swiftly and smoothly – there was no log-jamming or frustrating waits for things to happen or load, and I could relax, focus and begin to excel in my studies."

Rosie is, indeed, excelling in her studies. She aims to make her community and her family, particularly her late sister, proud.

"I really want to make a success of my degree. I'm from a Romany background and something of an outlier in my community and family. I'm the first in my family to go to university for instance. My parents are already so proud of me and I want to make them even prouder. And my community too - I'd love for more Romany people to feel that Higher Education was an option for them."

"Cyber Security is the industry that I want to aim towards. Data Protection is something that matters enormously, not just to me and what I want to do, but to everyone. The motivation, for instance, to help people protect their data is what drives me. An elderly lady who isn't well versed in computers, and is in danger of having her money stolen through cyber fraud, is exactly the type of thing I could prevent.

"To get to that stage, I want to first do a postgraduate degree – maybe after a short break following my Bachelor's – and then go on to do a PhD. I know my mum would be so proud if I could have a Doctor in front of my name.

"And related to that, are the words of my sister who passed away a few years ago. She was always telling me that I was really smart, and I would love for her remarks to be justified by my academic success."





Your Support for our International Students

A question that is frequently asked by our international alumni, is whether or not financial support is available to overseas students. And with over 30 per cent of our student body coming from overseas, it is essential that we offer them the same support that is available to our UK students.

Many of our overseas students rely on financial support from family back home. But in an everchanging and volatile world, that support can cease with little warning. Nevertheless, because of your generosity, Student Support is always there for them.

Furthermore, being a student a long way from home, can be socially and emotionally challenging. Therefore, the financial help you provide is allied with the work of Student Wellbeing, our specialist and comprehensive support service. Additionally, all overseas students have the option of signing up to our award-winning Mentoring Scheme.

Here are two students who have made the long journey to City St George's and who have benefitted from your support.



Kimia's story

Kimia is halfway through a PhD in Civil Engineering. Her motivations and ambitions are powerful and far-reaching. She let us know all about her journey to City St George's and her intentions for the future.

"I was born in Iran, and in an area, where at the age of just 7, we experienced a massive earthquake. Many people, living in substandard buildings rife with engineering mistakes, died. This became my motivation: why do people have to die because of engineering mistakes, and to understand why buildings fail and how we can prevent them failing in the future.

"I did my Bachelor's and Master's in Iran in Civil Engineering, and this became my great passion. Through researching postgraduate degrees online, and after discovering the work of Professor Konstantinos Tsavdaridis – all about really surprising ways to construct modular buildings, making them both sustainable and resistant to earthquakes – I knew that City St George's had to be my next step. I began my PhD in London in 2023, researching all about how the elements in buildings can dissipate energy when hit by seismic tremors."

Studying overseas, far away from home and family, took a real toll though.

"When I first moved to London with no family and no friends, there was a real sense of shock and I felt so very alone. I really needed someone to speak with as I became incredibly anxious.

"I also found myself really struggling to secure and pay for accommodation, as I had no financial guarantor in this country. Also, travel costs are so expensive. Needing to get into my studies from my small room in North Finchley was costing up to £10 a day. And then food expenses on top of that. My part-time jobs would only take me so far.

"Additionally, my parents weren't able to take the financial strain that they initially thought they could as there was a big drop in the Iranian currency."

Student Support was there to help Kimia out. Likewise, sessions with Student Wellbeing also helped reduce her stress and anxiety.

"The award made a big difference. It allowed me to pay rent and alleviate travel and food costs as well. This in turn allowed me to focus so much more on my studies.

"As for the wellbeing aspect of my difficulties and anxieties, I have now made some really good friends. As a teaching assistant in the undergraduate laboratories, I have also found my anxieties dissipating."

Kimia aims to take her research even further, and envisages saving lives from future disasters.

"Of course I really need to keep my research going and want to do a postdoctorate on structural engineering. After that, perhaps working with companies and helping them update regulations.

"I really want to make newer and safer buildings and to reduce risks all around the world, and in particular, back in Iran. The dream is to build homes and workplaces that are safe, with no one fearing accidents, floods, war damage or earthquakes."



Hariharan's story

Hariharan is an Indian student studying an MSc in Human Computer Interaction Design. Like Kimia, he too found himself in financial difficulties. Here he tells us all about his difficulties and ambitions.

"Growing up with a dad in the Indian Army meant that I had a childhood where I moved every three years, living all over India - Rajasthan, Delhi, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. This nomadic childhood definitely shaped me and allowed me to dream big and over long distances."

"Tech has always been a passion of mine since I was a kid, and I was always fascinated by the 'why' behind it. I could always feel the difference, but I didn't know how to explain it."

"Then, during COVID, I found a video about product design and human-computer interaction. I dove in headfirst, learning everything I could. I started looking at Master's degrees, and it was City's that stood out. And securing the Global STEM Leadership Scholarship, covering half my fees, made it easier for me and my parents to fund my aspirations."

Even with the scholarship, Hariharan still found himself struggling financially.

"Coming from a non-STEM background, this degree was already a big undertaking, but I was determined to succeed. I was working part-time to support myself, but the demands of the program eventually made it impossible to balance both work and studies effectively. Around the same time, my family experienced a financial setback and couldn't support me for the entirety of a semester. I was in a precarious financial position, unsure as to how I could continue my education far from home."

As in hundreds of other cases, and with the help of your generous donations, Student Support came to the aid of Hariharan.

"It was a lifeline. It covered essential living expenses for two crucial months, allowing me to fully focus on my studies during an incredibly stressful period. This grant gave me the time to secure a new part-time job that allowed me to continue my education. The grant also gave me the space to achieve distinctions in my modules."

It's not just the financial donations that you provide. Many of you also give up your time to become mentors, and Hariharan also benefited from this.

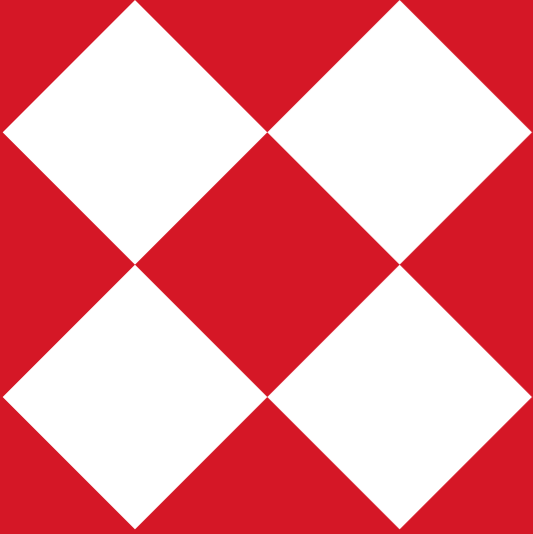
"I was also fortunate to be allocated a mentor through City, who has been incredibly helpful in guiding me toward my career goals in product design. This mentorship, with its inherent accountability and structure, is invaluable. I'm confident I made the right choice coming to City, despite the risks involved. The University and all of you have made this journey a surprisingly comfortable one."

And what next for Hariharan?

"While I haven't graduated yet, my ambition is to become a product designer. I'm passionate about creating user-friendly products that help people achieve their goals by reducing the friction between intention and outcome. If even a single button I design simplifies someone's task, I consider that a success."

To all of our mentors, thank you so much. The difference you make is enormous. And if you would like to learn more about mentoring and are interested in becoming a mentor, please contact Xenia Kotova at xenia.kotova.2@city.ac.uk.





Joining forces

City's exciting merger with St George's, University of London has combined two already excellent portfolios and allowed us to become one of the capital's largest educators. This will ally City's nursing, speech and language therapy, midwifery, psychology and optometry courses, with St George's medicine, pharmacology and biomedical science.

With this merger, City St George's role in educating and producing the health professionals of the future is more vital than ever. The pipeline of nurses and doctors, radiographers, midwives, psychologists, mental health professionals, speech and language therapists and optometrists, will provide essential reinforcements to our NHS. You, our generous supporters and friends, are ensuring that this pipeline keeps on flowing.

Many of you are already helping fund our groundbreaking Aphasia Clinic which develops and offers life-changing interventions that dramatically improve the prognosis for those suffering from aphasia, a devastating language and communication disability.

Your support over the last year has benefited over 300 students in the School of Health & Psychological Sciences, allowing us to create the health professionals of tomorrow.

We asked two current nursing students to tell us how they have benefited from your support, and what they think of the merger.





Victoria's story

Victoria is studying for a Master's degree in Nursing and will graduate in the summer of 2025. She is already a qualified nurse, specialising in mental health, but wants to boost her skills.

"Medicine has always been really important to me, and all of my roles have reflected that, right from the start when I joined the Royal Navy as a medic. Currently, I'm a Mental Health Nurse and I really enjoy working with my patients. But as they are more prone to other diseases than people who don't have mental health issues, bolstering my skillset with a Master's degree felt like an important step."

However, with a family to support, Victoria's ambitions were in danger of being derailed because of financial stresses.

"When you decide to resume studying, the financial challenges have to be considered. I have two children - a 3-year-old and an 18-year-old - and therefore had to think about this really carefully. It seemed possible, but after undertaking the MSc it quickly became apparent that this was going to be difficult. Running your home life, paying for childcare, paying bills - rent and food costs - was really taking a toll. Student finance only goes so far, and even with my part-time work, it was proving incredibly hard. Also, juggling everything else at home was putting a real strain on my academic studies. I found myself struggling to focus on my education. I desperately needed help."

With your help, Student Support was there to take up part of the strain and give Victoria the space and freedom to focus and think about her immediate and longer-term future.

"The award made an enormous difference, freeing me up to focus on my studies and pull back on my part-time work. It really took the burden away from stressing about money. I didn't need to explore getting loans, which I really couldn't afford."

"I now aim to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anaesthetist. I want to work myself up to that. The dream role would be as a CEO, though, one who can make a difference to the healthcare system as a whole. I would love to be part of something bigger."

And what does Victoria think of the merger?

"I know that St George's is a really good University, and I feel the coming together of both institutions' best qualities can only be a good thing. I think it will be a really good thing for the communities in North and South London as a whole."



Eric's story

Eric is in the final year of an Adult Nursing degree and tells us all about his motivations and how, as a mature student, he arrived at City St George's.

"I finished my History of Art degree right at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, and, as the summer arrived and people were dying in huge numbers, I had something of an epiphany. I loved my degree but it suddenly felt quite trivial. And with the great strain that the NHS was being placed under, I made a vow to take steps to help out in some way. A degree in Nursing seemed to be the obvious step. At the earliest opportunity, and at the tail-end of the pandemic, I applied to City."

Eric realised that it would be challenging, and as the struggle hit home, he found himself needing to find the right balance between work and study.

"By comparison, my History of Art degree, felt like a hobby, something that was fun. However, studying to become a nurse was really serious, and the academic workload alone really started to tax me. Outside of my placements, I needed to keep things ticking over with part-time work, but found myself struggling to keep up with my studies. Therefore, the student hardship fund was a lifesaver. It gave me room to concentrate and make sure everything was sticking up top, and that I wouldn't be letting anyone down on the ward."

Is Eric happy with his decision, and what does he plan to do next?

"Well, for me, nursing isn't about the future, it's about the present. I've never worked this hard in my life, but the sense of pride at the end of a busy and hectic shift is what I was looking for when I made that decision all those years ago."

And what does he think of the merger with St George's.

"I've heard, from fellow nursing students, a whole range of opinions on this. But for me, it feels like a consolidation of the whole health profession. You learn quite early on, that in medical scenarios, nurses are just as vital as the most skilled surgeon. And to have the whole range of professions studying in one institution, means that all of the courses can learn things from each other, and realise that we are all aiming towards the same things, to make a positive impact each time we come on shift."

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**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

City St George's, University of London is an independent member institution of the University of London. Established by Royal Charter in 1836, the University of London consists of 16 independent member institutions with outstanding global reputations and several prestigious central academic bodies and activities.