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**The difference
you have made**

Impact Report 2025



Dear alumni and friends,

As the end of the year approaches, I am very pleased to introduce you to our 2025 Impact Report. It includes stories that are powerful and moving, yet all have positive outcomes made possible through your considerable and unceasing generosity.

All these stories outline just how important you are in helping these students succeed. 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.

What has struck me most strongly this year is the resilience that our students show in the face of adversity. Many of you contribute to UniCares and Ali's story (page 4) illustrates just how driven and focused our care-experienced students are. His difficult start in life, losing both of his parents at a very young age, has not prevented him from chasing his dream of becoming a pilot. Your support is helping to propel him towards that dream.

Resilience, too, from our overseas students who are benefitting immensely from your help. Esther's sudden and dangerous journey to the UK (page 12), fleeing the war in Ukraine, has not stopped her from aiming as high as possible. Indeed, with over 30 per cent of our student body coming from outside of the UK, it is vital that we are there to help when life and events place great strain on our students.

We all know that a university education remains the best choice that a young person can make. Not only through greater career prospects and earning potential, but also in helping our students find out exactly who they are and what it is that they want to do with their lives. All three of the young people featured in the section on Student Support (pages 6 to 9) changed direction during their degrees and are set to go out into the wider world and make a positive difference.

However you choose to support City St George's – with a donation to UniCares, Student Support or the Aphasia Clinic – or, indeed, 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.

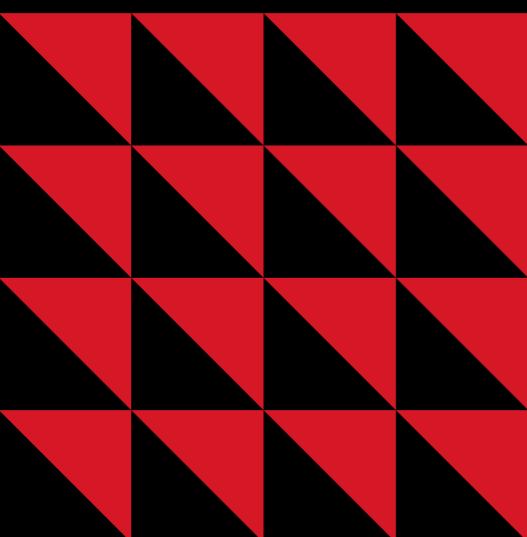
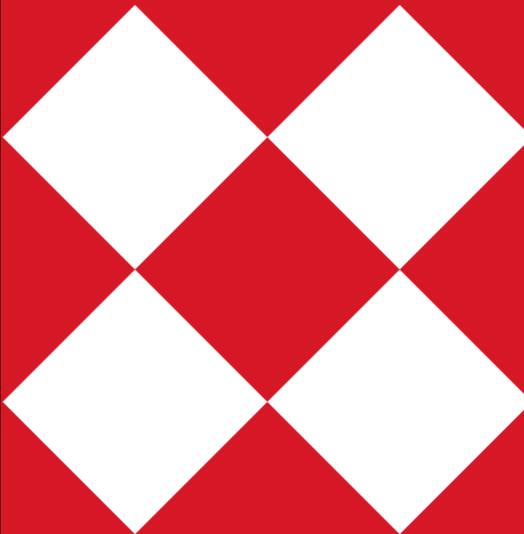
As always, please accept my heartfelt gratitude for your continuing support and the enabling of such important work. Your generosity helps us to transform the lives of our students.

Thank you so much.

Best wishes,

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

Your impact in 2025



47%

You were one of the generous 47% who said 'yes' when asked to make a donation



21

Age of our youngest donor



92

Age of our oldest donor



153%

increase in students registering for support from UniCares



800

Almost 800 alumni and supporters made a donation



£1.7M

in gifts and pledges to the University



174

mentors coupled up with City St George's and Bayes students



879

Student Support awards, helping students who are struggling financially

You care, UniCares

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

With your help, UniCares 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 Georges, and throughout the long and challenging journey to the life-changing goal of graduation, UniCares will accompany them every step of the way.

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



Ali's story

UniCares students often lack strong support networks and have to become independent at a much younger age than their peers. They face multi-layered challenges that they must navigate without the guidance or safety net of a parent or guardian.

But this forced independence can also lead to greater resilience. And with your support added in we are able to ensure that this resilience is rewarded. Here is just one story that illustrates a UniCares student overcoming adversity.

Ali is in the second year of a BSc in Aeronautical Engineering and is excelling. This in itself is a remarkable achievement, since Ali tragically lost both of his parents at the age of ten. We sat down with Ali and learned all about his difficult journey to higher education and his plans for the future.

"In my early teens, I lived with my extended family, but after that, I entered a really difficult period in the care system, living in communal houses with other care-experienced boys. Unfortunately, this wasn't ideal. The support I got was lacking, and my ambitions were often overlooked.

"In this semi-independent accommodation, I struggled to concentrate. The boys I lived with had very different lifestyles from my own - late nights filled with games, music, and parties - making it near-impossible for me to study for A Levels. I would resort to staying at the library until closing time just to find a quiet space.

"Sixth form was tough. My mental health suffered and I faced big financial pressure. I needed extra academic support but just couldn't access it. My A Level Physics teacher, who was actually a Biology teacher, even admitted she didn't fully understand the material, which made things harder. Despite these challenges, I did well. I believe that with the right support, I could be achieving even more.

"That said, these challenges made me more resilient. For example, I tried to explain to my housemates how important education was for breaking the cycle we were in, and that moment sparked something in me: a desire to mentor others and advocate for the value of education, especially for those who lack parental guidance or emotional support."

We also asked Ali just how much of a difference UniCares was making to his time here.

"Before arriving at City St George's, I felt isolated and unsupported. UniCares have been incredible, though. The care leaver bursary allowed me to buy a powerful laptop - essential for my course, which requires advanced graphics capabilities. For the first time, I could complete assignments and carry out research from home.

"Plus, knowing that 24/7 advice is available through UniCares gives me peace of mind. The mental health support and priority counselling are invaluable."

And what about those hopes for the future?

"My dream is to become a pilot at British Airways, the best airline in the world. This is why I chose Aeronautical Engineering as my degree. I'm also working towards applying for their Speedbird Pilot Academy Preparation programme in 2027. I'm using this time to prepare thoroughly and build my experience.

"I'm actively seeking sponsorship to cover the costs for this. I'm attending aviation events, connecting with mentors, and doing everything I can to strengthen my application. I'm hopeful that I'll be eligible next year and I'm also applying for a British Airways internship for next summer.

"Additionally, giving back is incredibly important to me. As my uncle says, 'If someone helps you out, make sure you pass that on.' I've taken that to heart. I'm now a Student Ambassador for the Widening Participation programme at the University, mentoring and volunteering to support students like myself. I also plan to join the Spring 2026 telephone campaign to personally thank all of you who have helped me along the way."

And finally, how does Ali think his mother and father would feel about what he has achieved?

"I think they'd be proud - quietly proud, maybe even surprised. My journey hasn't been straightforward, and I've had to make a lot of decisions on my own, often without the kind of guidance or encouragement that many others take for granted. But I've always believed that if I kept pushing forward, stayed focused, and didn't let my circumstances define me, I could build something meaningful.

"If they could see how far I've come - from making my way through the care system, fighting for my education, and now studying Aeronautical Engineering with the dream of becoming a pilot - I think they'd feel a mix of pride and maybe even regret. Pride in what I've achieved, and perhaps regret for not being part of the journey. But I don't dwell on that. I'm going to channel everything into building a future I'm proud of, and into helping others who've faced similar challenges."

It is clear that Ali is a remarkable student, one who has greatly impressed everyone at City St George's. UniCares Adviser, Michel Salamouni, was struck by just how driven he was. "He has such a proactive mindset, proving himself to be so resilient in the face of great challenges, approaching setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow."

Michel also has a message for all those who choose to support our care-experienced students:

"What I find most inspiring about my role is seeing the difference support can make in students' lives. Often, we're helping them navigate challenges that would otherwise put their studies or wellbeing at risk, and being able to offer practical solutions, like financial support or advocacy, can completely change their trajectory. With your help, we are giving students the stability and confidence that they need to thrive. Seeing that transformation is incredibly rewarding and reminds me why this work matters so much. Thank you to everyone who has donated."

We are truly grateful to all our donors whose contributions help UniCares go the extra mile. In the year ahead, UniCares will once again be supporting record numbers of vulnerable students, as we have had a 153% increase in student registrations to our service.

Your generous gifts continue to change lives.



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

Student support and journeys of self-discovery

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 1,400 of you have made donations to Student Support over the last decade.

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

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

And what kind of difference will they choose to make? Students will sometimes embark upon their studies with a clear idea of where they are heading. Yet not always. One of the most overlooked aspects of higher education is that it gives students the opportunity and knowledge to discover exactly who they are and what they want to do with their future.

Here are three stories illustrating why your support matters, and how university can forge new ambitions and send our students in different directions.



Simon's story

Simon graduated in the summer with a BSc in Accounting and Finance. His time here certainly brought adversity, but it has also sent him in an unexpected direction. He tells us all about this and why he opted to study Bayes.

"It had to be a London university – I'm from Gloucester and had a desire to experience a really big city, but also one that wasn't a million miles from home. When I looked at all the business schools in the capital, Bayes really stood out. I liked that it was right at the heart of the City of London. Like it was an institution that 'meant business'. You study here and then work here! As for my subject, I've always been a bit of a whizz at maths. My older brother and sister would come to me for help with their maths homework, even though I was a couple of years behind them both at school. But I wanted to apply that knowledge to something more practical. Hence, the world of business and my eventual focus on accounting and finance."

Clearly, family is very important to Simon, and it was this that was at the heart of why he needed the help of Student Support.

"Last winter, we had some devastating news, with my mum being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Although we had been suspecting that diagnosis for a while, it still knocked us for six. My siblings and I all live away from home now, and our dad died when I was five – I needed to come up with a plan that involved someone always being with mum. This meant giving up my part-time job for a few months, and travelling back and forth to pull my weight. Although I knew that student support was there, I was still surprised – and overjoyed – when they gave me the finances to help me out at an incredibly difficult time."

"I'm forever grateful to Student Support. They gave me the space to be there for mum. Those first few weeks after the diagnosis were full of uncertainty, and the luxury of being able to go back and forth every week between Gloucester and London was invaluable. That I could do this and not lose momentum in my final year was so important. Without that help, I'd have ended up deferring the year. Who knows, I might have decided to drop out completely. Also, when my mum learned that I was doing this interview today, she asked me to mention that it was such a huge weight off her mind. It's not just me saying thank you to the alumni who make all of this possible: it's my mum saying thank you too."

But what of that unexpected direction that Simon has taken?

"With Mum's diagnosis, my priorities have really changed. Staying in London and getting a role at a big firm was the masterplan when I began my degree. But now I sense that, certainly for the foreseeable future, I need to be closer to home. What's more, the West Country is full of opportunities and I've secured a trainee role in a wealth management firm. However, some of this is borne out of the incredible support that we have had from Parkinson's UK. I think my bottom line has changed from being as successful as possible to making a difference. And, of course, when I think about it, those things are not mutually exclusive. I want to get as much experience as possible, and then perhaps look into making a difference in the charity sector, looking after the finances of an organisation with the core aims of making people's lives better."

"Thank you so much to everyone who donates to the University. And thank you from my mum, my brother and my sister too."



Malaika's story

Malaika has just graduated with a degree in Law, and like Simon, she has also decided that the Third Sector holds the key to her ambitions. She tells us about her journey to this decision.

"I chose Law because I wanted to help people and because it looked very exciting. However, during my course, I've decided that I'm not necessarily going to go into the law profession. Various things that I've undertaken during my degree have pushed me towards the charity sector, which, of course, is another way for me to help people."

And what were the circumstances that led to Malaika needing Student Support?

"I've been brought up with an ethic of working to pay your way in life, and my family is very traditional in that my mum is the housemaker and my dad goes out to work so we can pay the mortgage and bills. My siblings and I know that we've all got to work hard to get what we want in life. This is one of the reasons why I chose The City Law School. I could commute for the first year and still do jobs near home and pay my way. I worked as a hairdresser before studying, and I thought I'd be able to manage easily."

"However, the first thing that hit me was just how expensive the commute was becoming. I wanted to live closer to the University, and this led me to move into London for my second year, living in a flat with other students. But I was quickly struggling with all the extras on top of rent - groceries and travel costs - even from Zone 3 - and it really started to impact my studies."

With your help, Student Support was there for Malaika:

"It made my day-to-day studying so much easier. I stopped worrying about money as much – I'd been so worried that I was left in tears, feeling despondent. I factored in the right part-time work that would help me focus more. My essays improved, I began to realise my potential, and I was able to take up all the opportunities that the University provided."

"It led me to undertake voluntary roles, such as mentoring younger students. I also worked as a local translator with Women's Aid, supporting vulnerable women in need. Alongside this, I held a weekend role in the NHS as a Helpdesk Operator.

"I was also fortunate to spend a year abroad at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey's top university, which also gave me the opportunity to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina. There, I visited orphanages and conducted research for a paper on international law.

"All of these experiences not only deepened my academic understanding but also lit a personal passion for charity and humanitarian work.

"And on the Student Support and how this is funded by our alumni, I really hope that other students can benefit from this. It's made such a difference to my time here."

And what of Malaika's ambitions now?

"My degree really brought home to me how much of a passion I have to make a difference to people's lives. One of the most important things that came out of my time at City was discovering who I was.

"I'm already finding my way into the charity sector - at the moment, I am volunteering at my local Refuge and food bank, helping people directly while I search for the perfect role for me. It feels like this is the place where I belong.

"Somewhere down the line, my dream role would be to establish my own charity that focuses on women's rights and refugee rights, providing a platform for vulnerable voices and ensuring that no one is left behind."

Malaika also tells us exactly why university was the right decision for her:

"I really wanted to make my mum proud and to show my dad that I was capable of standing on my own two feet. As the first woman in my family to go to university, I've done just that."



Caryn's story

Caryn is in her third and final year of a BA in English. She tells us all about her struggles and a second-year epiphany.

"English Literature and writing have always been my favourite subjects, and from primary school age, I have devoured books and written my own stories. The plan, then, was to do an English degree and then an MA in Creative Writing, with the ultimate ambition to write amazing books for children. I was encouraged in this by my teacher at secondary school, Mrs Bailley. She was my greatest mentor, instilling me with the desire to aim high and to completely believe in myself."

Last winter, two things collided, changing Caryn's direction.

"First of all, I got Covid. Which hit me like a train. This was surprising because I'd never had it during the actual Pandemic. I was laid up in bed for most of Christmas and January and felt that I was slipping behind in my essays. I lost my part-time job and was not able to return to it until the summer. I'm certainly still suffering the impact of the virus and really needed Student Support to help me with my monthly rent and bills.

"Heartbreakingly, I also learned that Mrs Bailley had passed away a few months before. This really caught me out and I had a real few months of panic, doubting myself, and also feeling a sadness that I wouldn't be able to invite her to my graduation.

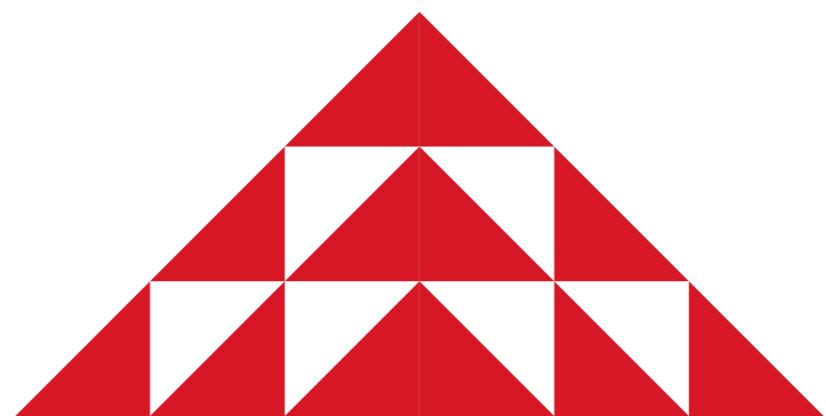
"Of course, eventually you manage to channel sadness into something much more positive, and I had this sudden epiphany. I'd always considered it something of a cliché that if you study English, you're only ever going to become an English teacher. But it struck me that my admiration wasn't just about my English teacher encouraging me, it was about the inspiring job that she was doing and how much joy she seemed to take from that. I decided, almost overnight, like her, that I was going to teach."

And this is exactly what Caryn plans to do.

"I'm going to do my utmost to secure a First, and then – after a year away from studies - will undertake a PGCE. This, by the way, doesn't mean giving up any plans to write – so many writers seem to be or have been teachers anyway – and I have the idea and the bones of a novel ready to go."

"All of this makes me recall Mrs Bailley's favourite poem, Robert Frost's 'The Road Not Taken', and how it resonates with my situation. As she said, it's not a poem of regret for roads not taken, but rather an affirmation of the road that you do take, for that is the only one that will ever make a difference."

"I feel, more and more strongly, that I can give something back and hopefully inspire young people in the way that Mrs Bailley inspired me, to pursue things that you are passionate about. Education is so important. Hopefully, that justifies the support that alumni and supporters gave to me when I was struggling last winter."



A global university

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 30% of our student body coming from overseas, it is essential that we offer them the same support that is available to our UK students.

And in an ever-changing and volatile world, that support has proved vital, time and time again.

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 Abena's and Esther's stories, two students who have made the long journey to City St George's and benefited immensely from your support.



Abena's story

Abena is in the second year of her Nursing degree and is inspired to make a difference in her adopted country. Here she tells us all about her motivations and dreams for the future.

“The passion for my subject and my profession all stem from when I first arrived in England. I come from Ghana and arrived here just before Covid hit. I worked as a domiciliary care worker, so going into elderly people’s homes and being able to make a real difference really sowed the seeds of why I wanted to get into the nursing profession. Then working on acute wards in NHS hospitals really made me feel that this was where I belonged.

“Inspirational ward managers began to suggest that this could be a pathway that I could take and they began to encourage me to be a nurse. And further to that, the patients that I was looking after actually regarded me as a nurse. They would assume that I was qualified and when I told them I wasn’t, they would say, “Why are you not a nurse?” This gave me the final push to make it my goal.

“Studying at City St George’s was obvious. Not only did my cousin get a first-class honours degree in Nursing here, but also, when I first came to the UK, St George’s Hospital was the place I was referred to for the illness that I have, an autoimmune condition called ITP (Immune Thrombocytopenia).

“I have really fond memories of the hospital and how they looked after me and helped with my condition. That it was my very first encounter with a British hospital seems somehow perfect, in that it’s where I’ve ended up studying.”

As with all the stories we feature, Abena needed your help to progress.

“My health and condition have been the biggest obstacle. I live in Brighton and therefore need to commute to London for lectures and placements. However, having my support base – both friends and the professionals who look after and monitor my illness, taking care of my daily medication – meant that I needed to stay on the south coast. But I couldn’t really manage the burden of travel costs.

“So when Student Support gave me the award, the relief on my travel costs was enormous. I still pay a proportion of these costs but the student support award takes care of the rest. This means I can fully focus on my course and it keeps me mentally stable too. If the support wasn’t there, I cannot imagine the impact it would have had on day-to-day challenges. And as I’m now beginning my placement at Mile End Hospital in Tower Hamlets, I need to be in London more and more.”

And what does the future hold for Abena?

“After graduation, the plan is to go into forensic mental health. This is something I’m really passionate about and it will help me fulfil the goal of contributing positively to society and the UK, a place that has given me so much since I arrived. Long term, I really want to specialise in this area, particularly with those people who have experienced domestic violence.

“I also want to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all who have contributed to helping medical students like me succeed. Thank you so much.”



Esther's story

After completing a foundation year in Business Management, Esther has just begun her first year of a Business and Finance degree. She let us know all about her incredibly challenging journey to City St George's and her hopes for the future.

"I first came to England about five years ago, leaving my home country of Ukraine because of the war. I was placed with a family in Cambridge under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and I slowly began to build a life here. The next step was clearly university, but there was no doubt that this was going to be a gigantic challenge.

"I chose Business, because I've always had at the back of my mind the idea of starting something completely new, such as a business or a company. Maybe the idea is to leave the past behind and move forward. My initial plan, before the war, was to go and do this at university in Kyiv, but that's just not possible now. As for London, I wanted to base myself here because it's right at the heart of the financial world. And, of course, Bayes Business School has such a fantastic reputation."

Financially, the Foundation Year proved challenging. But with your help, Student Hardship was there to alleviate many of Esther's most pressing issues.

"The bottom line was that I needed support for day to day living costs. Not only rent, travel, food and bills, but also other things.

"When my city in Ukraine came under attack by Russian fighter planes and the missiles started to strike, I had to leave immediately. I was out of the city in six hours. Any longer and my life would have been in even more danger. There was no time to pack anything other than a small backpack. This meant leaving my laptop behind. The award allowed me to invest in one, such a necessity for my studies.

"All of this took away much of the stress and allowed me the space, not only to dedicate myself to my studies but also to take a fuller part in life at Bayes. I joined societies, such as the Ukrainian Society and the Finance Society, and this year I'm also hoping to join the Volleyball Club, maybe even representing City St George's at the sport."

And what are Esther's ambitions for the future?

"Professionally, I need to work on obtaining an internship. A placement with a Finance company in London – maybe at a consultancy or at a bank would be wonderful. I'm also looking for a mentor whilst I'm at Bayes, and will be signing up to the mentorship scheme, which I've heard great things about.

"But there are also other ambitions, ones tied up with my country. I have a dream to write a novel, one that breaks down the now stereotype about Ukraine, the one that makes us synonymous with war. I want to write something that talks about the mentality and the culture of the people there, one that reminds everyone that Ukraine is a real country."

As Esther says, she really hopes to benefit from a mentor in the year ahead. And indeed, to all of our mentors, thank you so much. The difference you make is extraordinary.

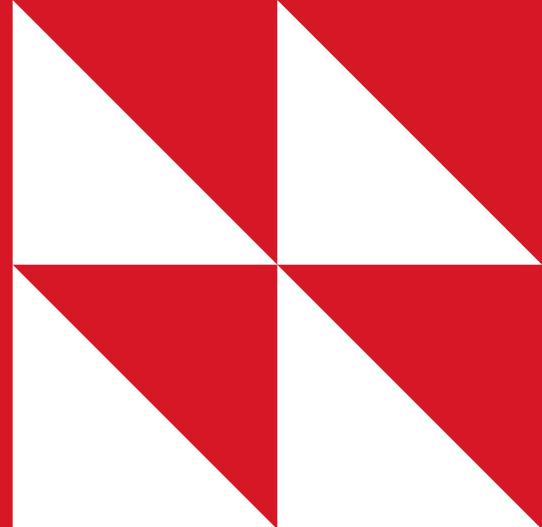
If you would like to learn more about mentoring and are interested in becoming a mentor, please contact Xenia Kotova at xenia.kotova.2@citystgeorges.ac.uk.



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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 17 independent member institutions with outstanding global reputations and several prestigious central academic bodies and activities.