

**Rosa Humphreys**

Seren Graduate 2020  
Studying Human, Social and  
Political Sciences (HSPS)  
Queens' College, Cambridge



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# SEREN

## PROSPECTUS

**CLASS OF 2020/2021**



Seren has been a wonderful support programme for our school. It is a brilliant scheme that we're proud to be a part of, helping us to ensure that talented students are able to fulfil their potential. I am a firm believer that finance or background should not be a barrier to higher education. Seren enables us to ensure this is the case, providing our highest achievers with the support and resources they need to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

**Emma Lloyd**  
Achievement Leader KS5, Llanishen High School

I went to almost every Seren event that was relevant to me, but there are two that stick out to me, as they defined the direction of my education and thus my career.

The first was a medical taster day. I had only recently considered medicine as a future for myself about a month before, and with 6 months until I had to apply via UCAS, I was very unsure. The event consisted of talks with current medical students, a GP roleplay event, presentations and an example of case-based learning. The reason this sticks out to me is because I left there knowing that it was medicine I wanted to study.

The second was an application test practice day for those who needed to sit an extra test to get into their universities. For me it was the BMAT, the Biomedical Admissions Test. It consisted of three sections, general problem solving, school-based education and a 1 page written essay. Medicine is a highly competitive course, so standing out in the BMAT reflects very well for the student when applying. The tips I learnt that day in Swansea and the practice it gave me, on top of my own practice, helped me to get an interview at Oxford.

Now, starting in October 2020, I will be reading Medicine at Oxford, and the events I participated in through Seren helped guide me in that direction.

**Bailey Jones**  
Seren Graduate 2020, Powys  
Studying Medicine at University of Oxford



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## WELCOME

**It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Seren programme and to congratulate you all.**

You have been selected on merit as one of the brightest students in your school and from across Wales.

For our Year 12 learners, after what's been a difficult and challenging time for you, your parents and teachers, your dedication and academic excellence has been rewarded by your incredible set of GCSEs this summer. You should be very proud of your achievement.

Over the course of the next 18 months you will be provided with a broad range of opportunities to ensure that you can make informed choices about university life; but to also stretch you above and beyond the classroom, and to spark your intellectual curiosity.

We have Seren students currently studying at the leading universities across the World. They have

competed with the brightest minds, and succeeded. And so can you. I have every faith in your abilities and dedication to compete and succeed and follow in their footsteps.

***“Being part of Seren should be celebrated, and I encourage you to make the most of the programme.”***

Finally, I would like to thank the dedication and commitment of our amazing teachers, lecturers, heads of sixth, hub coordinators, our host of university and educational partners, volunteers, and Seren alumni. Seren would not be the success it is today without their incredible contributions in helping you fulfil your aspirations.

Good luck!

**Kirsty Williams**  
Minister for Education  
Welsh Government

## WHAT IS SEREN?

**Seren is a Welsh Government initiative dedicated to helping Wales' brightest students achieve their full academic potential and support their education pathway into leading universities in Wales, the UK, and overseas.**

It is a collaboration between Welsh Government, state schools, colleges, leading universities, alumni, local authorities, and third sector organisations to provide extensive national and regional activities.

The Seren programme is available to Year 8-13 students from state schools and further education colleges across Wales, regardless of their economic background, personal situation, or location. By providing extra-curricular study experiences and super-curricular enrichment activities that enhance and go beyond the curriculum, Seren supports the aspirations and ambitions of the most talented and able learners, helping to widen their horizons, develop passion for their chosen field of study, and reach their academic potential.

Working in collaboration with leading universities and education partners, support includes subject-specific masterclasses to stretch and challenge, workshops, tutorials, study guides, higher education advice and guidance, and mentoring.

For Year 12 and 13 learners, the programme provides unique opportunities to receive direct advice and guidance from university

Admissions Tutors about how to apply to Oxford, Cambridge and other leading universities, how to develop competitive personal statements, prepare for university admission tests, and approach interviews.

Seren also offers Year 12 students an unrivalled chance to experience undergraduate level study through its exclusive university summer schools.

To read more about these highly competitive programmes, go to page 20.

This year, we are welcoming our biggest cohort yet. More than 10,000 students from Years 8-13 will be supported during the 2020/2021 academic year.

**And you are one of them!**

**Now it's your turn to Reach for the Stars!**



# SEREN REGIONAL HUBS

Divided into 13 regional hubs, the Seren programme spans the length and breadth of Wales. Hubs are led by a dedicated Seren coordinator who liaises with schools and further education colleges and is the point of support for teachers, students, and parents/carers.

Each coordinator promotes Seren's national events to all participating schools and colleges, as well as organising a calendar of activities available to schools within their region. There are also cross-hub events that allow students to attend an even wider range of activities.

## 1 Gwynedd & Anglesey

Elfed T Morris  
[ElfedMorris@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:ElfedMorris@gwynedd.gov.uk)

## 2 Conwy

Christine Wynne  
[Christine.Wynne@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:Christine.Wynne@conwy.gov.uk)

## Denbighshire

John Evans  
[John.Evans@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:John.Evans@denbighshire.gov.uk)

## 3 Flintshire & Wrexham

Debra Hughes  
[seren@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:seren@wrexham.gov.uk)

## 4 Powys

Jayne Bevan  
[Jayne.Bevan@powys.gov.uk](mailto:Jayne.Bevan@powys.gov.uk)

## 5 EAS Consortia (Years 8 - 11)

Kathryn Bevan  
[Kathryn.Bevan@sewaleseas.org.uk](mailto:Kathryn.Bevan@sewaleseas.org.uk)

## EAS Consortia (Years 12 & 13)

Siân Farquharson  
[Siân.Farquharson@sewaleseas.org.uk](mailto:Siân.Farquharson@sewaleseas.org.uk)

## 6 Cardiff

Gillian James  
[GillJames@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:GillJames@cardiff.gov.uk) or [seren@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:seren@cardiff.gov.uk)

## 7 Vale of Glamorgan

Nisha Shukla  
[nshukla@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:nshukla@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

## 8 Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil

Stephen Parry-Jones  
[parjon@talktalk.net](mailto:parjon@talktalk.net)

## 9 Bridgend

Susan Roberts  
[Susan.Roberts2@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Susan.Roberts2@bridgend.gov.uk)

## 10 Neath Port Talbot

Karen Thomas  
[K.Thomas5@neathporttalbot.gov.uk](mailto:K.Thomas5@neathporttalbot.gov.uk)

## 11 Swansea

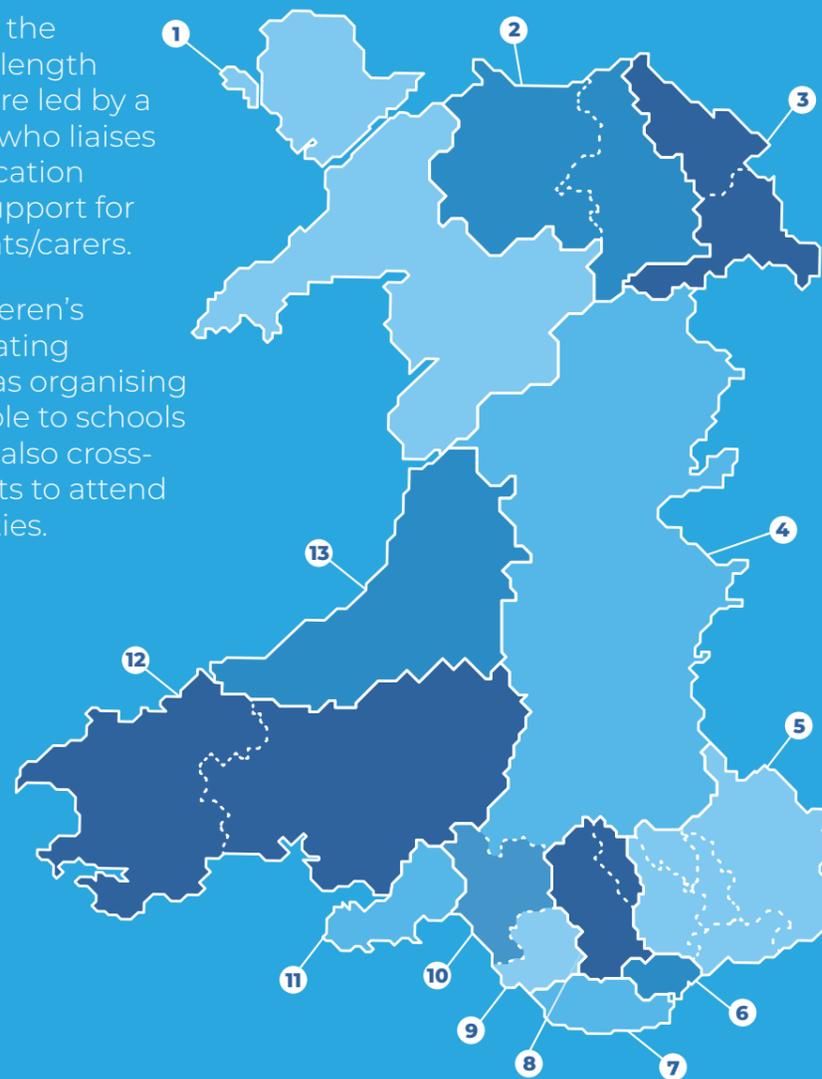
Fiona Beresford  
[Fiona.beresford@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk](mailto:Fiona.beresford@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk)

## 12 Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire

Julian Dessent  
[DessentJ@hwbbmail.net](mailto:DessentJ@hwbbmail.net)

## 13 Ceredigion

Rhian Arch-Rees  
[Rhian.ArchRees@ceredigion.gov.uk](mailto:Rhian.ArchRees@ceredigion.gov.uk)



You can download a list of all the participating schools within the 13 regional hubs, and the contact details for your regional coordinator from the Welsh Government [website](#).

# 2020/2021 NATIONAL PROGRAMME

**For the 2020/2021 academic year, Seren is offering Year 8-13 learners a comprehensive and wide-ranging virtual package of high-quality online support and activities in partnership with leading universities and providers.**

This year's national programme of activity is our most extensive so far. Here's an example of the exciting and interactive activities that you can look forward to...

## Seren Foundation – Years 8-11

- Online National Conference for Years 9 & 10
- Study workshops hosted by leading UK universities
- Subject-specific academic 'stretch and challenge' workshops
- Masterclasses and tutorials from university partners
- Links to national essay writing competitions
- Careers advice – where your choices can lead you
- High-energy workshops from Positively Mad covering important study topics and skills

## Seren Academy – Years 12 & 13

- Seren Academy National Conference (see page 6)
- 'Virtual' University visits including to Oxford and Cambridge
- Direct guidance from university Admissions Tutors including Q&A sessions
- University admissions test prep sessions including MAT, BMAT, and LNAT
- Personal Statement and interview guidance from academics and Admissions Tutors
- Online mock interview workshops
- Mentoring and links to Seren Alumni studying at leading universities
- Opportunity to apply for Seren's exclusive university summer school programmes
- Participation in the new Seren Award programme (see page 19)

Hub coordinators also develop activities within their region by working with the schools to deliver a varied programme of subject-related, extra-curricular, and enrichment activities. These activities vary by region, and your hub coordinator will provide information about upcoming events and activities via email through the schools.

## How do I find out what's happening and when?

Seren has highly active social media channels where you will get all the latest news and announcements – go to page 33 to find out how to connect with us so you don't miss out! And remember to check your email inbox.

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE



**7 - 11 December 2020**

**The annual Seren Conference is one of the highlights of our year, bringing together students, teachers, universities and other partners for an exciting and interactive week of learning, motivational advice, and inspiration.**

This year, our online celebration will bring together thousands of Seren Foundation and Academy students from across Wales to take part in subject-specific workshops, stretch and challenge activities, lectures, academic masterclasses, and live Q&A sessions led by experts from universities including Oxford, Cambridge, Cardiff, Aberystwyth, Durham, Bath and Exeter.

The conference provides students with an opportunity to find out more about their subjects beyond the curriculum and be inspired by academic professionals and industry representatives.

Students receive invaluable advice and guidance about the university application and admissions process, as well as hear first-hand about what to expect from university life from Seren Alumni, and how to make the most of the experience.

Sessions cover a range of topics from plotting career paths and adjusting to university life, to bursaries and scholarships, and subject-specific workshops.

**It's a virtual event not to be missed!**

Look out for your invitation which will be sent to you via your regional hub coordinator. And follow our social channels, as we will announce the schedule of online activities and sessions in the run-up to the event.

**Put the dates in your diary now!**

**Seren has forged partnerships with the UK's leading universities to provide unique extra-curricular study experiences and super-curricular enrichment activities.**

Our partners help us shape programme content, and open up unique experiences and routes for young people to fulfil their ambition of studying at the leading universities. Our partnership network is fully committed to deliver a quality online learning experience for you this academic year.

**These partners include:**

- University of Oxford – Oxford Cymru partnership with Jesus, New College and St Catherine's Colleges
- Cambridge University Outreach for Wales – Churchill, Trinity, Sidney Sussex and Magdalene Colleges

**Seren has also established relationships with:**

- The universities of Swansea, Bangor, Cardiff, Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Liverpool, and Southampton
- Yale Young Global Scholars, Yale-NUS
- The Social Mobility Foundation
- The Brilliant Club
- Lord Edmund Davies Legal Education Trust (LEDLET) and Legal Wales
- Further Mathematics Support Programme
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- The Open University
- MFL Mentoring Cymru

# OUR PARTNERS

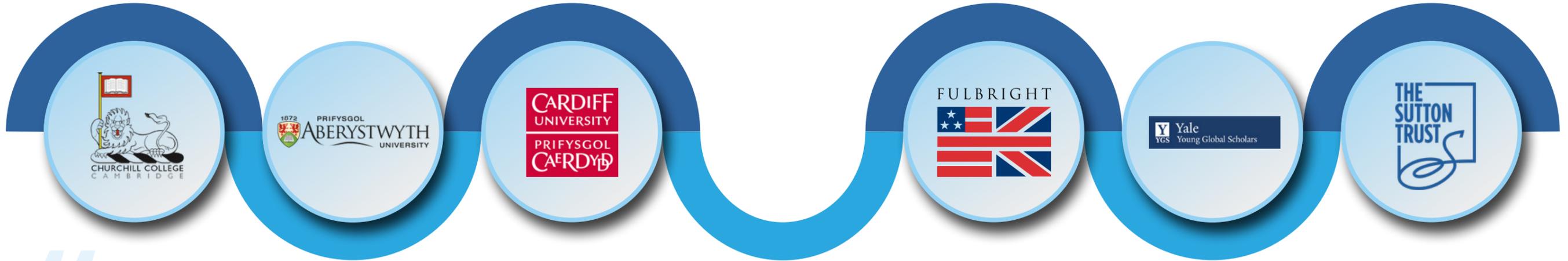
**We are also proud to work with the Fulbright Commission and Sutton Trust US.**

In 2019/20, seven Welsh students achieved places at US universities through the Sutton Trust US Programme, winning on average \$311,000 each in financial aid to fund their studies over the next four years.

One of whom is Seren student Donte Day who is now studying Economics at the University of Chicago. His inspirational story is featured on page 29.



# A WORD FROM OUR PARTNERS ...



It's been excellent in recent years to see state-educated Welsh students applying to Cambridge in greater numbers and with increased success. We anticipate these trends will continue, at Cambridge and other universities, as more outstanding Welsh learners select the higher education courses and institutions that are right for them. In 2021, we hope to offer a range of workshops that will be available to all interested Year 11 and sixth form students across Wales, working in partnership with teachers and Welsh Government.

**Dr Jonathan Padley**  
Fellow and Admissions Tutor  
Churchill College,  
University of  
Cambridge

Aberystwyth University is delighted to build on its relationship with Seren as we move into 2020/2021. The University will provide pupils with access to some of our best known experts in order to offer super-curricular opportunities that will get pupils right under the skin of their chosen subjects. Pupils will have the opportunity to engage critically and actively with some of the scholarly and practical challenges at the heart of our disciplines. We look forward to the future as many great minds come together on an exciting educational journey.

**Dr Anwen Jones**  
Pro Vice-Chancellor  
Aberystwyth University

Having worked for many years with Seren learners, the School of Medicine has discovered some amazing talent across Wales. The relationship we have with Seren learners year on year is that of a true partnership. We provide opportunities for them to discuss relevant medical topics (which helps them develop their confidence). We are endlessly rewarded with extremely mature and valuable contributions from the learners themselves. Their ideas around ethics and empathy and their reasoning and debating skills indicates to us with no doubt that these young people can and will go on to be great doctors of the future.

**Vicki Roylance**  
Student Engagement and Recruitment Manager,  
Cardiff University School of Medicine

We've been delighted to partner with Seren to promote the opportunity for Welsh teenagers to study in the USA. We're very proud of the students who have gained places through our programme in partnership with the Sutton Trust, but also of our wider work through EducationUSA where we offer free, unbiased advice and events about US study to help more people have this chance. Seren has been an incredible way for young people to connect with us and we look forward to continuing to help students explore US study!

**Rowena Boddington**  
Director of Advising and Marketing  
US-UK Fulbright Commission

Yale Young Global Scholars (YYGS) is proud to have talented high school students from Seren participate in our program. Over the last few years, we have welcomed some of the most earnest and motivated young minds from Wales to our community. They not only bring their intellect with them, they also bring their culture and for that, YYGS is so fortunate. Given the competitive nature of YYGS, the fact that so many Seren students matriculate each year speaks highly of their competitive edge globally; these students should be very proud to be part of Seren!

**Ami Sobin**  
Associate Director,  
External Affairs,  
Yale Young Global Scholars

Our US Programme is a once in a lifetime opportunity to explore what studying in the US is like. It will give you a taste of what it's like being an international student in the US and help you see if it could be the right fit for you. Through our relationship with Seren, we've supported dozens of Welsh students, many of whom have gone on to study at leading universities in the US.

**Laura Bruce**  
Director of Programmes at  
the Sutton Trust



# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SEREN EXPERIENCE

“**My advice to anyone who has the opportunity to be a part of the Seren programme is to seize it with both hands. What have you got to lose? Just think about it for a moment... you've got a whole lot to gain!**”

**Rosa Humphreys**

Seren Graduate 2020

Studying Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) at Queens' College, Cambridge

Being a Seren student means you will be offered an extensive range of activities that you can take part in, resources to download, webinars and masterclasses to log into, and summer schools to apply for. All of which are designed to support your ongoing studies and help you realise your ambition of furthering your education at a leading university, if that's where you want to go next.

We encourage you to grab as many opportunities as you can, but what you choose to get involved with is up to you.

- Attend our National Conference!
- When the applications open for our summer schools, apply!

- Enter the essay writing competitions!
- Register for the Admissions Tutor Q&As – put your questions directly to the experts!
- Take advantage of the study skills tutorials and guidance sessions!
- Take the plunge and go for the Seren Award!
- Explore the e-Seren resources!

We hope that by reading the many stories from previous Seren students, you will be inspired to embrace everything you can.

You all have aspirations, ambitions, and goals. Seren is here to help you reach for the stars!

“**2020 has been a strange year for everyone. However, that does not mean that the experiences available to you as students will be limited. There will be many different opportunities offered to support you on your journey after Year 13, and you have a responsibility to make the most of it and make the most of every experience. If that is an experience at your school, something you have found online, or an event hosted by Seren, I am sure there will be strong support to allow you to sample all types of trails at university – as long as you take advantage of everything to come over the year!**”

**Guto Tegid**

Seren Alumni

Studying at Kings College London

# 7 TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED



**1. Start now!:** Browse the materials (including this prospectus), talk to your teachers and hub coordinators, and explore the online e-Seren resources to get a good understanding of exactly what Seren offers and how you can make it work for you.



**2. Challenge yourself:** Seren is designed to expand your horizons, deepen your knowledge, take you out of your comfort zone, and challenge your every step in a fun and motivational way. Take a deep breath and dive right into it!



**3. Network:** Seren brings together young, like-minded people. Sharing your experiences and learning from each other is such an important part of the whole Seren experience, whether it's during an online student Q&A forum, or in person with one of your fellow students.



**4. Allocate space and time:** Throughout the year, we'll be announcing lots of events, activities, and resources over our social channels that you can take advantage of. But don't overload yourself! Allocate time each week to get stuck into a couple of webinars or read study guides, and put the big online event dates in the diary.



**5. Relax:** Seren aims to give you support to achieve your full potential, not give you extra work. Our programme is here to help take away some of your anxiety, stress and fears about your study and taking the leap to university.



**6. Be sure to ask for help:** Seren is all about supporting you. Help is always available from your hub coordinators, fellow students, the experts who host live Q&A sessions, and Alumni. All you need to do is ask.



**7. Reach for the Stars!:** Don't doubt yourself. All you have to do is have the confidence to reach out and grab it!

#Seren ★ #ExploreYourSubject ★ #ReachForTheStars ★ #JustGoForIt

“The Seren programme motivated me by helping me to recognise that I, an ordinary boy from a ‘disadvantaged’ area, was academically gifted.”



## HOW TO CONQUER YOUR A LEVELS

**Bailey James**  
Seren Graduate 2020  
Studying Law at Durham

**I want to share something with you; something valuable. Something that I think will help you with your college/sixth form studies.**

I want to share an insight into how I conquered my A Levels and gained a place at one of the world’s most prestigious universities, and how you can too.

On the A Level Results Day, I walked out of the main hall of Tonyrefail Community School with the highest A Level results one could possibly achieve: A\*A\*A\*. And in less than a month, I will leave my childhood friends, my loving family and the beautiful green mountains of the Rhondda Valley to begin a new chapter studying Law at Durham University.

The biggest factor that helped me to conquer my A Levels was an invisible force that pushed me to make a difference – I’m talking about motivation.

The most motivating factor in the Seren programme for me was the inspirational words of my hub coordinator, Stephen Parry-Jones, at the Seren launch event. His wise words still to this day compel me to put 100% in to everything that I do:

**“If there is one thing that you take away from here today, let it be this: The Seren programme is what you make of it.”**

Alongside the personal development that the Seren programme encouraged, I was put into contact with various wonderful organisations such as The Sutton Trust and The Social Mobility Foundation at the Seren annual conference. These organisations presented opportunities that enriched my personal and academic development. As 1 of 250 students in the UK selected to be a participant in the Sutton Trust US Programme, I spent a whole week in America learning about US higher education and had the privilege of staying at Princeton University.

Having also been selected to be a participant in the Social Mobility Foundation’s Aspiring Professionals Programme, I attended professional skills workshops and secured multiple work placements: one at a top law firm in London and another at the Ministry of Justice’s Prison and Probation headquarters in Cardiff. These schemes significantly helped me to gain a competitive advantage over other students when applying to universities as they gave me practical experience in the sector that I aspired to work in, and motivated me by showing the great things that I am capable of.

In summary, the Seren programme provided me with the equipment to climb the highest mountains and open the most solidified doors. Without the confidence and self-belief the programme encouraged and the opportunities it presented to me, I would probably not have achieved four A\*s at A Level or secured a place to study Law at one of the world’s leading universities.

On that note, remember that I am just a past Seren student that followed the same path that you are about to walk. I am essentially a future you.

With that in mind, I want you to read and think about these next words very carefully and deeply:

**“Even if the odds are against you, life is what YOU make of it, and only YOU have the power and control required to make a real difference in your life.”**



# SEREN

SYLFAEN ★ FOUNDATION

YEARS 8 - 11

*The implementation of the Seren programme at Lewis School Pengam throughout the past year has been invaluable to our pupils. There is a progression route from the Seren Foundation to the Seren Academy which has created both aspiration and focused goals. All learners in the Seren Academy are applying to Russell Group Universities and 80% are applying to Oxbridge, with one Year 13 pupil achieving a place at the prestigious Harvard Law School. Without the support of Seren this would not have been possible.*

**Bethan Jenkins**

Seren Coordinator, Lewis School Pengam

*Through the pre-16 Seren programme, I was fortunate enough to be able to earn a place on the Cambridge Summer School for Law. The circumstances of lockdown dictated that I was physically unable to attend the summer school; but that is in no way to detract from this experience. As normality is ostensibly being restored, I can hope this programme will manifest into more opportunities for me in the future, particularly with universities as prestigious as Cambridge.*

**Joel Horsman**

Year 12 Academy student, Lewis School Pengam



Joel Horsman

## WHAT IS SEREN FOUNDATION?

**The Seren Foundation is for students in years 8-11 at state schools across Wales and is designed to support studies, help learners build confidence, and to make informed choices about their A Level subjects and route to university if that's their ambition. It brings together young, like-minded people to share ambitions and aspirations through an extensive range of activities.**

While the possibility of going to university might seem a long way away, particularly for students in Year 8 or 9, it's never too early to think about a dream career or the educational path that might be needed to get there.

**This is where Seren Foundation can help...**

The programme is designed to help you make informed decisions about GCSE and A Level choices and what subjects might be needed if you want to study a degree subject at university, and ultimately pursue your dream career. Activities will help explain higher education and the opportunities available after A Levels, and dispel myths about university study, especially at Oxford and Cambridge.

By opening links to academic experts and providing subject-specific seminars, workshops and guidance sessions, the Seren Foundation programme can help you develop valuable cognitive skills required for your GCSE and A Level studies such as analytical and critical thinking, reasoning, research, and problem solving. Resources and workshops have also been developed to enhance your personal skills such as communication and how to craft, present, and debate your ideas. And there are tools and techniques that you can utilise to help you handle any stress and anxiety you may be feeling about study and exams.

We encourage all Seren students to continuously explore subjects that are of particular interest, and to expand the boundaries of your knowledge around these interests, and being part of the Seren Foundation will help you do that.

**“ Joel has worked exceptionally hard to receive such an opportunity. His Cambridge Summer School was something I saw him deeply engage with. Students from deprived areas and in conditions such as this are not given these types of opportunities. My wish is for more students to have access to opportunities similar to those offered in the Seren programme, namely in disadvantaged areas. I am extremely proud of the hard work and dedication Joel had put into his studies. ”**

Jill Falconer, Parent of Joel Horsman

# SEREN FOUNDATION DIGITAL RESOURCES



## 2020/2021 PROGRAMME

**The Seren Foundation programme offers a wide variety of activities available to take part in throughout the year, tailored for each year group.**

We have partnered with leading universities, charities and private organisations to offer a high quality, well-rounded programme of online support. Experts from some of the best universities in the UK will be delivering subject-specific masterclasses, seminars, and advice and guidance workshops.

Additional learning materials and online resources are available including webinars and live Q&A sessions to develop your study skills, revision skills and tips on how to stay positive and look after your own health. There are also creative opportunities to enter competitions run by top universities, including prize-winning essay writing competitions.

**Here's a flavour of the sort of activities you can expect:**

- Online National Conference for Years 9 & 10
- Study workshops hosted by leading UK universities
- Subject-specific academic 'stretch and challenge' workshops
- Masterclasses and tutorials from university partners
- Careers advice – where your choices can lead you
- High-energy workshops from Positively Mad covering important study topics and skills

Hub coordinators also develop activities within their region by working with the schools to deliver a varied programme of subject-related, extra-curricular, and enrichment activities. These activities vary by region, and your hub coordinator will provide information about upcoming events and activities via email through the schools.

**This year, we're pleased to be able to introduce a new element to the Seren Foundation programme – a comprehensive series of digital study and motivational resources that have been developed to enable teachers to offer additional extra-curricular support to their Seren learners across Years 8-11.**

Produced by Positively Mad, the resources include 5 packages of pre-recorded presentations and associated study aids and worksheets to assist in the delivery of teaching and workshop sessions. This includes tools and tactics that learners can put into practice straight away such as effective notetaking and reading techniques, how to create mind maps, and how to balance stress.

**It's Positively Mad!**

Designed to be used within a group environment, learners will enjoy fast-paced, colourful and high-energy presentations which take a 3-step approach to mastery: Students are encouraged to 'Watch' the presentation twice, 'Read' through the tasks and then 'Do' the tasks.

The 5 presentations cover the following areas:



**A selection of informative presentations for parents/carers are also included:**

- **Emotional Backpack:** How to help your child manage their emotions.
- **The Feynman Technique:** How to become involved in your child's learning.
- **A Guide to Dual-Coding:** A technique to help learners remember facts and topics.
- **D.O.S.E Your Child's Stress:** Learn how to do things that make your brain and your child's brain feel less stressed and more in control of thoughts.
- **Coping with Covid-19:** A comprehensive guide to keeping on top of your child's mental health and educational wellbeing.

For more information about the Positively Mad resources being made available to Seren Foundation teachers, please speak with your school or hub coordinator.

# SEREN

ACADEMI ★ ACADEMY

YEARS 12 & 13

“Our most able students at Tonyrefail Community School have benefitted greatly from the expertise of Seren in accessing the most prestigious universities and we highly recommend them to all schools.

Through working with Seren, our students have been able to attend some of the most distinguished universities across the globe, including the University of Oxford and Princeton in the USA.

If you want to raise your students' aspirations, develop their skills and open their eyes to the many and varied opportunities on offer, Seren is a must!

## Mrs Vicky Morgan

Assistant Headteacher, Tonyrefail Community School



Vicky Morgan

## WHAT IS SEREN ACADEMY?

**The Seren Academy invites the brightest and most academically able students in years 12 and 13 across Wales to join the programme. Students like YOU.**

While studying for your A Levels, Seren offers interactive activities and unique study experiences to support your ongoing learning, and expert guidance to help you make informed decisions as you prepare to apply to leading universities.

### Here's a flavour of the sort of activities you can expect:

- An invitation to the national online Seren conference, which brings together students and leading academics for a packed programme that goes beyond the curriculum
- Masterclasses, lectures, and guidance workshops from Oxford and Cambridge Admissions Tutors and academics
- Access to university admissions test prep sessions covering a wide range of tests that form part of the entry process for many universities
- Subject-specific masterclasses delivered by experts from leading universities covering a broad range of subjects including Law, Physics, Engineering, Maths and Medicine
- Expert guidance for writing a competitive Personal Statement and preparing for interviews
- Opportunities to apply for Seren's exclusive university summer schools, including the acclaimed Jesus College Oxford-Seren Summer School in partnership with the University of Oxford

- Mentoring and live Q&A sessions from academics and previous Seren students

### The Seren Award

The Seren Award is an exciting new element of the Seren Academy programme this year. It gives students the opportunity to replicate studying as an undergraduate at a highly selective university in the UK. By working with an expert PhD tutor on a research topic, the programme helps learners with their transition into A Level studies and gives them an experience that they can use in their future university applications.

Taking place over the course of one week, students attend three online tutorials with their PhD tutor and fellow Seren learners. After the final tutorial everyone will complete a university style final assignment of between 1500-2000 words. To support this, there will be an academic masterclass video to watch and some reading tasks to complete before attending their first tutorial, and learners will be set up on a virtual learning environment to ask their tutor and each other questions throughout.

Everyone who completes the final assignment will receive a university grading from the tutor and full written feedback upon their work.

# SUMMER SCHOOLS

**As part of the Welsh Government's commitment to help students reach their academic potential, each year during July and August, Seren runs prestigious summer school programmes in partnership with the University of Oxford and renowned international universities including Yale, Yale-NUS, and MIT.**

These are life-changing study experiences for Year 12 students to experience world-leading undergraduate level study designed to challenge, take you out of your comfort zone, deepen your knowledge and enrich your ongoing study. All of which will help you make informed choices about your future, and support your education pathway into leading universities in Wales, the UK, and overseas.

The summer schools comprise an extensive mix of challenging lectures, seminars, tutorials, projects, and reflective sessions taught by academics and experts in their fields. Participants also receive direct advice and guidance from tutors, university students, and Seren Alumni, as well as meeting fellow students in online classrooms where they can share ideas and work together on set projects.

This year, as the Covid-19 pandemic closed schools and international movement around the world, Seren's summer schools have transitioned from residential experiences to comprehensive online study programmes, with tutors and teaching assistants from the UK, America, and Singapore providing expert tutelage.

## **International Summer School and Yale Young Global Scholars Programme (YYGS)**

In 2020, the YYGS and international programmes were combined, creating an expansive and fully immersive three week online study experience. Devised and delivered by Jesus College, Oxford, the Seren International Summer School was a unique collaboration between Seren, the University of Oxford, Equal Education, Yale-NUS and MISTI (MIT International Science & Technology Initiatives).

Course leader and Access Fellow at Jesus College, Dr Matthew Williams, describes the course as the most ambitious summer school the College has ever been part of.

## **Jesus College Oxford-Seren Summer School**

We have strong links with Jesus College, which has now hosted 4 annual summer schools in partnership with Seren. It is a challenging and busy week-long programme of lectures and seminars taught by Oxford academics, and offers a unique insight into what it might be like to study at Oxford.

## **How do I apply?**

Each summer school is highly competitive with hundreds of students applying. Students are offered places based on exceptional applications and academic ability.

Each Year 12 Seren student has the potential to make a successful application, and we encourage all of you to apply! Across July and August 2020, nearly 200 Seren students participated in these unique experiences.

You have nothing to lose, but everything to gain. You only have to read some of the stories from other amazing students just like yourself who didn't believe they would get a

place, but took the bold step to make an application. And they were glad they did!

Applications for the Seren 2021 summer schools open in the New Year. Information will be provided by your hub coordinator and school, but follow us on Twitter and you'll be first to find out!

If you would like a taste of the world-leading undergraduate level lectures and masterclasses our summer school students took part in this year, go to page 28.

**“It is such a privilege working with Seren. The students, the hub coordinators, the teachers, the Network staff, and the political leaders all contribute enormously to this enterprise. And we're seeing its fruits in Oxford and across the world's best universities. By putting together talented people from across Wales, it's been possible to equip them with supercharged skills needed for university and careers.”**

**At Jesus College (Oxford's Welsh College) we will do everything we can to support Seren, not least in 2021 with two enormous and entirely free summer schools exclusively for Seren!**”

## **Dr Matthew Williams**

Access Fellow  
Jesus College Oxford University



“My advice to anyone who has the opportunity to be a part of Seren is to seize it with both hands. You have nothing to lose but a whole lot to gain!”



## MY SEREN JOURNEY

**If someone had told me a year ago that I'd be heading to the University of Cambridge in a few weeks' time to study Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS), I'd have told them they were crazy.**

Yet here I am, sat in my living room and beside me, my laptop with an email from Queens' College Cambridge regarding my moving in dates. Despite being only three weeks away, it still feels a little surreal.

Without question, Seren has played a major role in getting me here. When I first joined my Sixth Form at Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr in Swansea, I sometimes doubted my own academic capabilities, despite having a good GCSE profile.

**Rosa Humphreys**  
Seren Graduate 2020  
Studying Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) at Queens' College, Cambridge

I had never really considered myself as a potential Oxbridge applicant, let alone thought about the possibility of actually earning a place at Cambridge.

I was first introduced to Seren through my Seren Regional Hub at the start of Year 12 and was motivated by the wide range of academic advice offered to young people in Wales. From then on, I decided to grasp every single opportunity possible and this would be my advice to any student joining Seren this year. My experiences through Seren helped me discover a passion for a new subject and gain the confidence to believe in myself and be ambitious.

The first opportunity that came my way was the fortnightly Seren-led

after-school sessions which enabled me to extend my knowledge beyond my A Level curriculum. I had only briefly touched upon the subjects of politics and international relations in school, but the sessions helped introduce me to more complex topics like the economics of Brexit, and conflict in the Middle East, confirming what I truly enjoyed learning about.

With a new-found fascination for these subjects, at the annual national Seren conference, I was immediately drawn to the International Affairs and Globalisation course offered by Yale University's Summer School. The idea of flying solo across the Atlantic and being thousands of miles away from home seemed daunting, but the chance to study in one of the world's best universities, alongside hundreds of other young people, and with full funding from the Welsh Government, was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Following a successful application, in June 2019 I spent two weeks in Connecticut, attending seminars and lectures, working on research projects and spending time discussing difficult topics and current affairs with like-minded peers. It was an intense learning environment that challenged me academically.

I returned home an inspired and more confident person, with new friends from all around the world.

I was also fortunate enough to attend the Jesus College-Seren Summer School, living and studying like a student in Oxford for five days. It gave me an insight into Oxbridge's renowned 'tutorial/supervision' system, pushed me academically, developed my knowledge and motivated me to apply for Cambridge.

Seren was especially helpful during my university application, assisting me with my Personal Statement and ensuring I was well-prepared for my entrance assessment and college interview through insightful workshops and mock interviews.

I am now on the cusp of a major opportunity in my life and am very excited about starting my studies at Cambridge. With the help of Seren, as well as the teaching staff at my school, I have been on quite a journey over the past two years and am immensely grateful for their support.



# A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

*We didn't know quite what to expect when our daughter first took part in the Seren project. Looking back almost two years later, we can see clearly that Seren combined practical support and advice on things like UCAS Personal Statements and interviews, with opportunities to participate in specialist summer schools. Most of all, Seren generates confidence and ambition in young people. As a parent I would simply say, encourage your child to take the opportunity – it can be life-changing.*

**Catrin Evans**

Parent of Seren Academy Graduate 2020

*Bailey is the first in our family to go to University, and to get in with flying colours, 4 A\*s, makes me and his father and our entire family so proud of him. He's the most driven person I know but Seren helped take him to the next level, because it gave his confidence a boost, so much so that he felt he could look further afield and choose any university anywhere in the world.*

**Kerys James**

Parent of Bailey James



Kerys James

# WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN EXPECT FROM SEREN

**As a parent or carer of a Seren student, we'd also like to welcome you and your family to Seren. Your understanding of the programme is a key part in helping your child make the most of Seren, and your support and encouragement is beyond measure.**

Through the information provided in this prospectus, you will see that your child will have access to a broad range of activities and opportunities, delivered by some of the top universities and education providers to support your child's learning. Seren is designed to provide information, advice and guidance to students at a time when they have big decisions to make about their future. Seren is there to reduce anxiety about study choices and the university application process, and ensure Wales' brightest students are being given the support needed to achieve their full potential – not to create extra work.

Your child can choose to take part in as many – or few – activities as they wish. However, we encourage all Seren students to get involved with as many opportunities that interest them, and to stretch themselves, but also to be sensible about how much they take on. Previous Seren students have demonstrated that the programme can prove highly motivational and that by taking the opportunities on offer, they have gained confidence and achieved success that they didn't initially think they would be capable of.

## How you can help

By getting involved with Seren, your child's horizons will be widened, their skills stretched and their thinking challenged. However, being selected for the programme is just the first step. What pupils go on to achieve and experience is up to them, but with your support they can make the most of the opportunities open to them. Firstly, please ask your child to read the many inspirational quotes and stories from students just like them that feature in the prospectus. Hearing from their peers can be very motivational.

We also have a lot of online resources on our e-Seren [website](#), including advice on how to support your child with their university applications, understanding the differences with the Oxford and Cambridge university admission processes, and student finance. For more information about our e-Seren Resources, please see page 28.

## Connect with us

Seren has highly active social media channels where we share a lot of complementary resources and advice for parents/carers alongside activities for students to get involved with. We also issue e-newsletters and activity announcements which will be emailed to you via your hub coordinator. Please discuss the opportunities with your child.

# FAQs

## Q Do I have to pay for my child to be part of Seren?

Being part of Seren is free of charge. Activities are provided at no cost to you. If circumstances allow and it is safe to do so there may be opportunities for trips to universities where there may be costs involved, but we want to ensure that no student is unable to participate due to financial circumstances. Please talk to your school/college for further information.

## Q My child doesn't want to apply to Oxford or Cambridge. Is Seren relevant to them?

Absolutely. While Seren has strong links with the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Cardiff and Aberystwyth, it has also built partnerships and programmes with many other leading universities in the UK and the USA, and new relationships are being forged all the time. Many of the opportunities and sessions offered to your child are not specific to any academic institution – for example Personal Statement writing or choosing a subject – so it is designed to benefit all pupils, regardless of their choice of university.

For more information about our partners, please see page 7.

## Q Is university the right route for all bright students?

Seren was established in response to declining numbers of pupils applying to the top universities and is designed to support bright Welsh students to make competitive applications. With this in mind, Seren's activities are designed to cater for those who are considering higher education. Pupils who are unsure of their future are advised to keep an open mind and make the most of the activities on offer, but if they decide that university is not the right route for them, there is no obligation to attend the activities on offer. Similarly, pupils do not have to take up the offer of a place on the Seren programme.

## Q How do I find out what events are available in my regional hub across the academic year?

Each hub designs its own annual calendar of activities. For information about your hub's activities, please contact your school/college or contact your local hub directly - you'll find details on page 4.

## Q What if none of the events happening in my child's hub seem relevant to my child's areas of study/interest?

Activity developed by each regional hub is designed to meet the needs of the majority. As such, there may be pupils for whom these do not appeal. Hubs are also working collaboratively to offer cross-region activities, so there may be an opportunity to take part in online workshops and events that are being offered elsewhere. The first port of call should always be your local hub coordinator who may be able to suggest other activities in different hubs that are available to attend. Seren also offers a national programme of activity and online events. Your hub coordinator will distribute information about these events, but we encourage you to follow our Twitter and Facebook channels for the latest news and announcements.

## Q How much time will my child be expected to commit to Seren?

Each hub will have a different schedule of activities so the time commitment will vary between hubs. Workshops and activities will take a few hours a month, but students also have access to reading lists and follow up activities to do in their own time if they wish. In addition, Year 12 pupils may have access to unique opportunities such as the Jesus College Oxford-Seren Summer School at the University of Oxford which takes place in the summer holidays.

## Q Does being a member of Seren guarantee my son/daughter a place at a leading university?

No. Being part of the Seren programme does not guarantee any pupil a place at any university. Participants will still need to apply through the normal routes and their success is based on their own achievements. What Seren can help with, however, is helping shape students' thought processes in areas including subject choice, applications and admissions advice. Seren's aim is to raise Welsh pupils' aspirations and knowledge of university, in order to make as competitive an application as possible and reach their full academic potential.



**We have created a comprehensive online hub of distance learning resources and exciting study opportunities to support Seren students.**

Available on the Hwb website, and freely accessible to all, e-Seren is designed to enhance and enrich your ongoing studies, and help you read widely around your subjects and chosen degree by directing you to an extensive range of subject-specific study material, lectures and seminars. You can access a wide range of live online events, webinars, videos and podcasts, all designed to stretch and challenge you within subject-specific areas, and to help with your university selection and application.

Our partner universities have also created guidance to help you develop your Personal Statements, prepare for admissions tests, and help you through the application process.

And a wide range of advice and guidance resources from universities and their students help provide insight about university life, and offer beneficial information for learners, teachers, parents and carers about the university selection and application process.

You can find our e-Seren resources for Academy students [here](#).

Resources for Foundation learners will be launched shortly.

### Summer School Lectures

Get a taste of the world-leading undergraduate level lectures and masterclasses our summer school students took part in this year:

**Maths & Physical Sciences Lecture: Economics of Climate Change**  
<https://youtu.be/aXwhZ3fQpYo>

**Self-Development Session: Is there a formula for success?**  
<https://youtu.be/hecnLfnYo7I>

**Artificial Intelligence: Fact & Fiction**  
[https://youtu.be/\\_4sRNEFABpk](https://youtu.be/_4sRNEFABpk)

**What is Intelligence?**  
<https://youtu.be/J1BKZ8tDLrM>

**Introduction to Astrobiology**  
<https://youtu.be/YHzg2zKp3yc>

**How do you write a KILLER personal statement?**  
[https://www.youtu.be/955Z7n2L\\_CO](https://www.youtu.be/955Z7n2L_CO)

**Prepping for Oxbridge interviews**  
[https://youtu.be/Fte48LyBU\\_U](https://youtu.be/Fte48LyBU_U)

*“I am so thankful to Seren and the Sutton Trust as I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the support, and if I hadn't been on the Seren programme and attended the launch event.”*



## A BRAVE NEW WORLD

**Donte Day**  
Seren Graduate 2020  
Studying Economics at University of Chicago

When I got my acceptance to the University of Chicago I really couldn't believe it. I'd convinced myself that I would never actually get in, so receiving confirmation of my place was absolutely amazing.

I've always wanted to study in a big city and Chicago ticks all the boxes. The university has one of the best economics schools in the world and has produced some of the most famous economists such as Milton Friedman.

The course will also provide me with a guaranteed paid internship as well as the opportunity to study abroad for a year in another city, such as in Paris, which I am keen to do.

Doing so will help me to broaden my horizons and give me the chance to learn about my course from another viewpoint. I'm obviously nervous about going so far away without knowing anyone but I'm also really excited. I'd like to come back to Wales and pass on my experience and things I've learnt to help inspire and motivate the next generation of Welsh talent.

**“Countless Welsh students at Cambridge will tell you they owe their places to Seren, me among them. For some it was the demystification, the myth-busting, the advice, but for many it was simply the confidence to apply to such high-flying institutions.”**



**Tomos Wood**  
Seren Alumni  
Studying  
Engineering  
at Queens' College,  
Cambridge

## SEREN ALUMNI

**“Having very minimal knowledge of the application process and what pursuing French at Oxford would actually entail, I was apprehensive and didn't think Oxbridge was for someone like me. I hadn't heard of many people from my area that had been through the process of application, let alone people who had been students there.**

**But Seren didn't exist when I applied to Jesus College in 2015. If I'd had the chance to be part of the Seren programme, it would have put me in a much better position when applying to universities as I would have gained confidence in my abilities, insights into life as a student and my subject area, as well as receiving invaluable support for the upcoming application process.**

**I therefore wanted to offer my help and support as a Researcher and Teaching Assistant for the Seren International Summer School hosted by Jesus College this Summer. It was important for me to share my experience and provide the valuable support that was not available to me when I first started applying to university.”**

**Lois Williams**

Seren Ambassador

Masters Degree in French Literature at Jesus College, Oxford

## SEREN ALUMNI

**When a student leaves the Seren Academy programme at the end of Year 13, they automatically become an Alumni.**

Since 2016, we have seen 1000s of students graduate from the Seren Academy programme with outstanding A Level results and pack their bags to begin a new life of exhilarating study at some of the world's leading universities.

But they didn't achieve that success overnight or easily. It took lots of hard work, dedication, trial and error, underpinned by a belief that they could aim high. And they grabbed every opportunity they could. Just like you can.

Our Seren Alumni and Ambassadors know the anxiety and uncertainty you are feeling right now. That's why many of them continue to support the Seren programme and come back as mentors and summer school teaching assistants to share their experiences and help build your confidence.

We hope you will find inspiration and comfort in all the students' stories we've featured. And when you graduate Year 13, we hope you'll come back and help inspire and encourage the next generation of Seren students.

**“If I hadn't read and listened to all the anecdotes of Seren Alumni talking about their experiences as ordinary Welsh students reaching extraordinary heights, I wouldn't have the confidence I have today.”**

**Hama Shariff**

Seren Graduate 2020  
Studying Medicine at Cardiff University

**“Seren's programmes are key to reassuring bright Welsh students that they are good enough to apply for top universities, and that they are within their grasp. It is hugely important in dispelling myths, breaking down barriers and boosting the confidence of students just like me.”**



Lois Williams

# USEFUL RESOURCES

**Oxford and Cambridge Universities** Both universities provide a dedicated out-reach programme for students and teachers across Wales that includes virtual visits to colleges through regional hub partnerships, admission workshop roadshows and teacher training opportunities. Importantly, they also offer support on the application process for Oxford and Cambridge. Through Seren, you will be informed of any outreach and partner activities via your school, hub coordinator, or our social media channels.

**Cambridge University:** [www.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cam.ac.uk)

**Oxford University:** [www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk)

## **Oxford and Cambridge – The Similarities and the Differences**

An explanatory guide by Cambridge University aimed at teachers and parents/carers who are supporting a young person through their Oxbridge university application.

[www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/find-out-more/teachers-and-parents/oxford-and-cambridge-similarities-and-differences](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/find-out-more/teachers-and-parents/oxford-and-cambridge-similarities-and-differences)

**Sutton Trust** Sutton Trust is an education charity that supports young people from less advantaged backgrounds to access leading universities and careers. Being a Seren student can link you to opportunities provided by the Trust.

[www.suttontrust.com](http://www.suttontrust.com)

**Fulbright Commission** The Fulbright Commission offers programmes, events and advice for UK students interested in studying, researching or teaching at accredited higher education institutions in the USA. The US-UK Fulbright Commission hosts both the Fulbright scholarship programme and the EducationUSA advising network for the UK. The Fulbright Commission and Sutton Trust work together to deliver opportunities to study in the USA.

[www.fulbright.org.uk](http://www.fulbright.org.uk)

**Social Mobility Foundation** The SMF supports high-achieving students from low income backgrounds across the UK into leading universities and careers. Being a Seren student can link you to opportunities provided by the Foundation.

[www.socialmobility.org.uk](http://www.socialmobility.org.uk)

**UCAS.com** All you need to know about applying to university through the UCAS process, application deadlines, UCAS Tariff points, finance, tracking your applications, decisions and offers, your results, and clearing.

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

**Informed Choices – Russell Group** Helping you understand which subjects open up different degrees, particularly at Russell Group universities.

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

**Student Finance Wales** Find out what support is available to full and part-time university applicants, and how to make an application.

[www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students.aspx](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-students.aspx)

# KEEP CONNECTED



## **Talk...**

The best contacts are personal contacts, so if you have any questions please talk to a representative at your school in the first instance, this may be a dedicated Seren coordinator, the head of the sixth form, or Key Stage teacher, for example.

You can also talk to your regional Seren hub coordinator who will be happy to help you – you can find their contact details on page 4.



## **Email...**

Your coordinator will send you regular e-newsletters and event announcements direct to your inbox. Be sure to check your mail regularly – you don't want to miss an application deadline, or online university Q&A session!



## **Get social...**

The best way to find out about all things Seren is by following us on social media.



## **We tweet... a LOT!**

Twitter is the go-to place to hear about all the exciting opportunities, events, activities and resources you can take advantage of. So get your smart device out and click 'Follow' now so you don't miss a thing!





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**REACH FOR THE STARS**