

Ryan Lenihan
Seren graduate 2021
Law and Politics at
Cardiff University



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



SEREN

PROSPECTUS

CLASS OF 2021/2022



Abi Vukashin
Seren graduate 2021
Medicine at New College,
University of Oxford



Having no family background in medicine and coming from a Welsh state school, applying to the University of Oxford was a very big decision. I couldn't help thinking 'would applying to Oxford sacrifice one of my other chances of getting into medical school?' as I knew the success rate of applicants was low and I doubted my ability to secure a place. Overcoming preconceived ideas about what a successful Oxbridge applicant looks like was another big hurdle. Seren gave me the support and confidence I needed to overcome these challenges and put in an application. I'm now looking forward to attending New College, Oxford this October!

I took part in Seren admissions test prep sessions for both the UCAT and BMAT as well as mock interviews which enabled me to practice the skills sought after in a successful Oxford applicant.

I was also involved with the Open University's Young People's Programme and received regular information from my Seren hub coordinator about monthly workshops and interesting presentations from experts in my subject. I had access to other opportunities including Cardiff University's Science in Health programme, which allowed me to view public lectures and apply for a work experience placement at the university's lab, as well as the Seren-Jesus College Oxford Summer School which ultimately had a big influence on my final decision to apply to Oxford.

You can read more about Abi's story [\[here\]](#)



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WELCOME

As one of Wales' brightest learners, I'm delighted to welcome you to the Seren programme and to congratulate you on your achievements.

It makes me proud to see how learners across Wales, like you, have gone above and beyond what is expected, and have continued to embrace their education and succeed in these unprecedented times.

Since 2016, our Seren programme has gone from strength to strength and has played a vital role in building the confidence and raising the ambitions of thousands of Welsh learners such as yourself.

As you progress through your studies and continue your education journey, the Seren programme will provide you with a broad range of opportunities to spark your intellectual curiosity, and ensure that you can make informed choices about your future.

We have Seren alumni currently studying at some of the best universities across the globe.

They have competed with the brightest minds, and succeeded. And so can you.

I have every faith in your dedication to compete at the highest level and follow in their footsteps.

Being part of Seren should be celebrated, and I encourage you to make the most of the programme. You have demonstrated your academic potential and ability to achieve your education and career goals. The world's leading universities are within your reach.

I would like to thank the teachers, lecturers, heads of sixth form, hub coordinators, our university and educational partners, ambassadors, and Seren alumni for their dedication and commitment to supporting learners across Wales. Seren would not be the success it is today without their unwavering contribution in helping you fulfil your aspirations.

Seren's motto is 'Reach for the Stars', so wherever and whatever you choose to study and do in the future, have the confidence to aim high. Pob lwc!

Jeremy Miles MS
Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, Welsh Government

WHAT IS SEREN?

Seren is a Welsh Government initiative dedicated to helping Wales' brightest learners 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 to 13 learners 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 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 achieve their goals.

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 learners an unrivalled chance to experience undergraduate-level study through its exclusive university summer schools - go to page 22 to learn more.

This year, we are welcoming our biggest cohort yet.

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



2021/2022 NATIONAL PROGRAMME

For the 2021/2022 academic year, Seren is offering learners between years 8 to 13 a comprehensive and wide-ranging programme of high-quality online support and activities delivered by leading universities and providers.

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

Seren Foundation – Years 8 to 11

- Online National Conference for years 9 and 10.
- Subject-specific masterclasses hosted by leading UK universities to super-charge your studies.
- Academic 'stretch and challenge' workshops.
- 'Routes to Languages' courses.
- Career-based sessions such as a focus on becoming a vet or medic.
- Careers advice – where your GCSE and A level choices can lead you.
- Advice and guidance about higher education and university courses.
- Essay and creative writing competitions.

For more information about the Seren Foundation programme, see pages 16-19.

Seren Academy – Years 12 and 13

- Seren Academy National Conference (see page 5).
- Subject-specific masterclasses.
- STEM seminars and tutorials.
- Masterclasses for subjects beyond the curriculum.
- Veterinary science, medicine and dentistry masterclass series.
- Live Q&A sessions on university admissions processes.
- Oxford and Cambridge admissions guidance.
- University admissions test prep sessions including MAT, BMAT, UCAT, and LNAT.
- Personal statement and interview workshops from academics and admissions tutors.
- Online mock interview sessions.
- Mentoring and links to Seren alumni studying at leading universities.
- Opportunity to apply for Seren's exclusive year 12 summer school programmes (see pages 22-27).
- Participation in the Seren Award (see pages 28-29).



Face-to-face events

Depending on rules and restrictions surrounding Covid, a number of face-to-face events will hopefully be available as part of the regional and national programmes. Your hub coordinator will provide up-to-date information via email about any opportunities.



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 43 to find out how to connect with us so you don't miss out!

SEREN ACADEMY NATIONAL CONFERENCE



Week commencing 6 December

The annual Seren Academy Conference is one of the highlights of our year, bringing you together with academics, university representatives, Seren alumni and undergraduates for a packed programme of in-depth learning, motivational advice and inspiration.

Our celebration event will feature subject specific workshops, stretch and challenge activities, academic masterclasses and live Q&A sessions led by experts from leading Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Cardiff, Aberystwyth, Durham and Exeter. You will also have the opportunity to visit a range of virtual exhibition stands from universities in both the UK and overseas.

The conference gives you the opportunity to find out more about the subjects you're interested in and might want to pursue at university.

You will receive invaluable advice and guidance about the university admissions process, how to make competitive applications as well as hear first-hand about what to expect from university life from Seren alumni.

Sessions cover a range of topics from plotting career paths and adjusting to university life, to bursaries and scholarships, and the opportunities for studying abroad.

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!



DELIVERING EXCELLENCE

Seren works with some of the best universities, organisations and education providers in Wales, the UK and overseas, all of whom share the same commitment to help young people aim high in their exams and fulfil their ambition of studying at the leading universities.

Our incredible partners help us create and deliver exceptional academic masterclasses, unique study experiences, extra-curricular and developmental activities that you will have access to as a Seren learner.

Here's just a few of those world-class institutions and organisations...

Universities and Colleges

- University of Oxford – Jesus College, New College, St Catherine's College
- University of Cambridge – Churchill College, Sidney Sussex College, Trinity College, Magdalene College
- Aberystwyth University
- Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science
- Bangor University
- Cardiff University
- Swansea University
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
- University of Exeter
- University of Bath
- University of Southampton
- University of Bristol
- University College London
- Kings College London
- The Open University Cymru

Professional and educational organisations

- The Social Mobility Foundation
- Lord Edmund Davies Legal Education Trust (LEDLET) and Legal Wales
- Further Mathematics Support Programme Wales
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal Veterinary College
- Medic Mentors
- MFL Mentoring Cymru
- Routes into Languages Cymru
- The Brilliant Club

Global universities and institutions

- Yale-NUS
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- Harvard University

We're also proud to work with the US-UK Fulbright Commission and The Sutton Trust, organisations that work together to deliver opportunities for learners to study in the USA.

Go to page 38 to read how one Seren learner's dream of studying in the US was realised after securing a prestigious four-year scholarship at the University of North Carolina (UNC)-Chapel Hill.

SEREN REGIONAL HUBS

Divided into 12 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, learners, parents and 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.llyw.cymru
- 2

Conwy
Christine Wynne
Christine.Wynne@conwy.gov.uk
Denbighshire
John Evans
John.Evans@denbighshire.gov.uk
- 3

Flintshire and Wrexham
Debra Hughes
seren@wrexham.gov.uk
- 4

Powys
Kate Thomas
KATET@crickhowell-hs.powys.sch.uk
- 5

EAS Consortia
Siân Farquharson
Siân.Farquharson@sewaleseas.org.uk
- 6

Cardiff
Gillian James
GillJames@cardiff.gov.uk or seren@cardiff.gov.uk
- 7

Vale of Glamorgan
Nisha Shukla
nshukla@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
- 8

Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil
Stephen Parry-Jones
parjon@talktalk.net
- 9

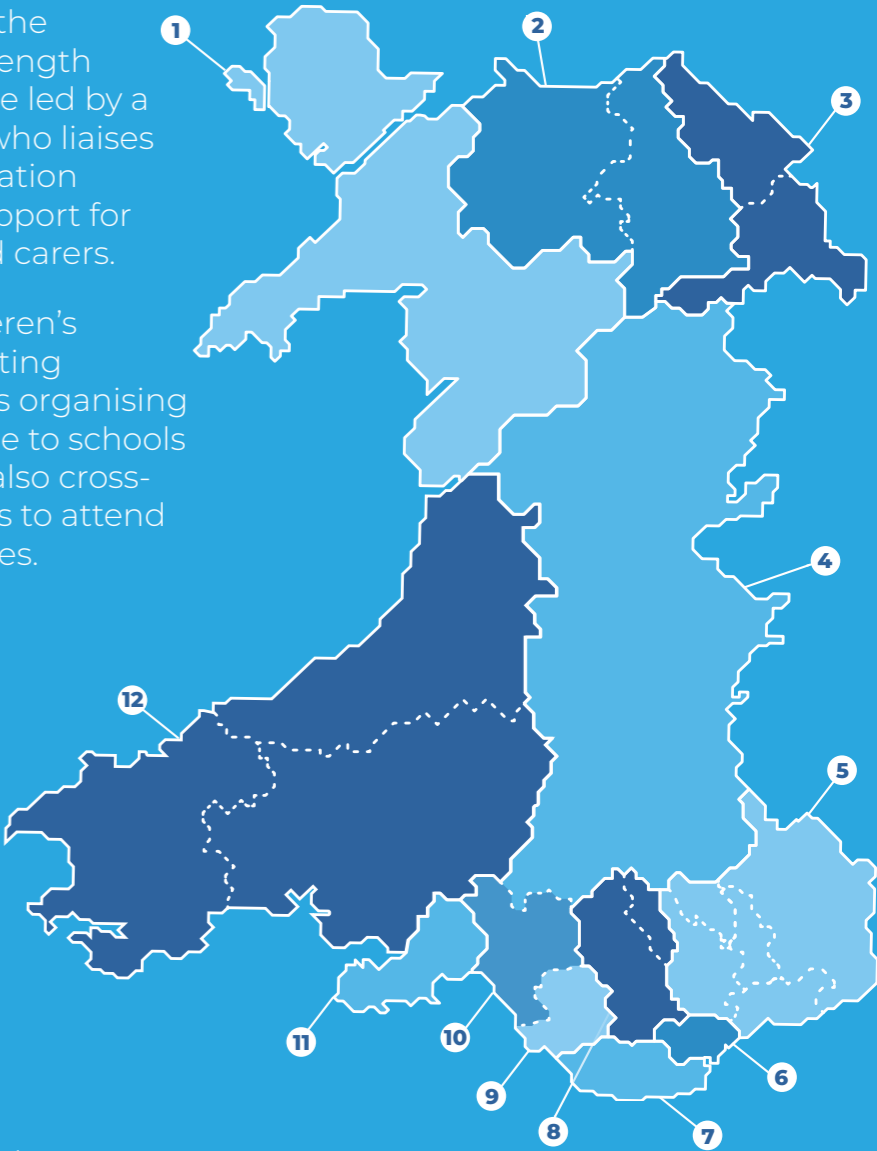
Bridgend
Simon Gray
Simon.gray@bridgend.gov.uk
- 10

Neath Port Talbot
Karen Thomas
k.thomas5@npt.gov.uk

- 11

Swansea
Fiona Beresford
Fiona.beresford@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk
- 12

Cardiganshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire
Bethan Jones-Hughes
BJones-Hughes@cardiganshire.gov.uk



You can download a list of all the participating schools within the 12 regional hubs, and the contact details for your regional coordinator from the Welsh Government [website](#).

SPOTLIGHT ON HUBS

Regional hub coordinators work with partners and universities to devise and organise a range of innovative super-curricular activities and study opportunities beyond the National Foundation and Academy programmes.

Here are a few examples of the wide variety of initiatives that you can look forward to...

Organised by:

Example activity

Conwy and Denbighshire

Medics and Dentists Access Programme

Year 12 learners will have the opportunity to experience a series of medicine and dentistry masterclasses and guidance sessions for aspiring learners to enter these professions.

Flintshire and Wrexham

The unique and exclusive programme is run in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board BCUHB, which is comprised of three district hospitals across North Wales: Ysbyty Gwynedd (West), Ysbyty Glan Clwyd (Central) and The Maelor (East).

Gwynedd and Anglesey

UCAT Test Prep

Resources, tools and books to help learners prepare for the required UCAT admissions tests and to write their assignments.

Introduction to the Cyber-Security Industry in Wales

An exposé into this rapidly growing sector for those interested in computer science, in collaboration with Cardiff University.

Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire

Digital Masterclass Series

A wide programme of digital subject-specific masterclasses is offered by academics from Aberystwyth, Swansea, Oxford, Bath, and Exeter universities. Subjects covered include chemistry, physics, geography, history, English literature, PPE, philosophy and maths, and feature general introductions and a Plenary with thematic experts.

Visit to London University and Houses of Parliament

An exciting opportunity to consider the role of Parliament for learners interested in careers within law, politics, sociology, and economics. Includes supportive visits to University College London and the London School of Economics.

Organised by:

Example activity

Cardiff

Seren Foundation Debating Sessions

Working in partnership with Fintech Wales, Foundation learners have the opportunity to take part in debating masterclasses on topics within this exciting and fast-moving sector.

Royal Navy Experience

Unique, interactive and fascinating masterclasses for Foundation learners provided by the Royal Navy, HMS Cambria, involving group activities, team building, problem solving, and presentation skills.

Super-curricular Masterclasses

A series of super-curricular masterclasses exploring subjects such as theology and politics.

Neath and Port Talbot

Regional Seren Summer School

An opportunity to attend up to 6 digital workshop sessions run by the universities of Oxford, Bath and Swansea. Topics will cover writing personal statements, admission test preparation, and a guidance session for learners and parents on the overall UCAS process. Swansea University will offer careers talks on where certain degree courses can lead you.

Bridgend

Powys

Masterclasses and Workshops

A wide variety of activities for Academy and Foundation learners across subject areas including psychology, sociology, humanities, law, English, chemistry, biology and physics, medicine, engineering, and humanities.

Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr Tydfil

Academy Masterclasses at Coleg y Cymoedd

Year 12 twilight sessions covering a wide range of subjects: English, history and politics, law, maths, medicine, physics and engineering, life sciences. Additional subjects will be offered such as architecture, optometry, pharmacy and Mandarin. Includes expert provision from the universities of Cardiff and Swansea, Further Maths Support Programme Wales, Royal College of General Practitioners Wales, and practising professionals.

EAS Consortia

Masterclass, Workshop and Lecture Series

Subject-specific events in collaboration with the universities of Cardiff, Bath and Exeter. Examples include: Degree workshops for law, medicine, physics, psychology and maths; mock interviews and support for required admissions tests; degree apprenticeships and industrial placements.

Vale of Glamorgan

Modern Foreign Languages Student Mentoring Project

The programme encourages learning international languages at GCSE level and beyond, in-classroom and online mentoring with undergraduate and postgraduate university students. Facilitated by Cardiff University in partnership with Aberystwyth, Bangor, and Swansea.

Swansea

Technocamps and Swansea University Super-curricular Series

Eight sessions for Foundation learners. Subjects include: Cryptography, Python maths, computer programming, probability and statistics, planets and orbits.



A WORD FROM OUR PARTNERS ...



At Cambridge, we're delighted to be offering a range of initiatives to Seren across 2021-22. For sixth formers, access to HE+ Online will be extended, following a successful trial last year. For teachers, we will be delivering the UK pilot of a new teacher training module based upon our internal programme for new admissions interviewers, for staff supporting applicants to Cambridge (and similar universities). These things are in addition to our now-standard range of workshops, available to all interested year 11 and sixth form students across Wales. In short, we're looking forward to a great year ahead.

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

Aberystwyth University is delighted to build upwards on the foundations of its strong relationship with Seren as we move into 2021/2022. The University already provides pupils with access to some of our best known experts to offer supercurricular opportunities that will get pupils right under the skin of their chosen subjects. We are also delighted to be reaching out to engage pupils in some of our most exciting teaching and learning projects here at Aberystwyth such as the development of Veterinary Science in collaboration with the Royal Veterinary College. We urge pupils to join us as we grow new areas of expertise and flex new intellectual muscles together.

Professor Anwen Jones
Pro Vice-Chancellor
Aberystwyth University

The support Seren provides to our next generation of doctors is truly unique. Our partnership with Seren learners is a rewarding one. We work hard to help them develop confidence and insight into why a career in Medicine is the right choice for them. In return, we watch with pride as they develop into young people with the maturity, empathy and reflective skills to become good medical students and great doctors.

Emma James
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

The Sutton Trust supports learners into universities and careers both in the UK and in US, helping them explore study opportunities and make successful applications. We also run Summer Schools in the UK, with leading universities including Cardiff, Cambridge and King's and a suite of Pathways to the Professions programmes to support students into careers such as medicine, law and consulting. Students also gain access to our Alumni programmes once they have completed a programme with us. We are grateful for our relationship with Seren, which has led to many Welsh students into leading universities on both sides of the Atlantic.

Laura Bruce
Director of Programmes at
the Sutton Trust

The international summer school is an incredible opportunity for learners to have access to a diversity of instructors from around the world with so many different perspectives, which is not available anywhere else. Seren summer schools offer transformative opportunities that allow learners to engage in academic experiences that give a unique view of what university education is like, and enable them to see that they are capable of applying here and abroad. One of the most important things is that they can be instrumental in helping learners make informed choices about their next steps regardless of what they want to study, and where in the world.

Liam Rahman
Director, Equal Education
Partners



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR SEREN EXPERIENCE

“My advice to future Seren learners would be to grasp any and all opportunities with both hands! The Seren programme offers so much and is what you make of it - you will learn something from every activity. Through Seren, I was introduced to a network of mentors, students, and invaluable opportunities including summer schools, subject evenings and academic advice. Seren ensured I was fully prepared for my university applications with insightful webinars, which provided advice on everything from personal statements and admissions tests to the interview process.”

Olivia Burgess

Seren graduate 2021

Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Trinity College, University of Oxford

Being a Seren learner 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 the activities available to you 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 test prep and interview 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 learners, you will be inspired to embrace everything you can.

You all have aspirations, ambitions, and goals. Seren is here to help you achieve them!

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 at a summer school or event with your fellow learners.



4. Allocate space and time

Don't overload yourself! Allocate time each week to get stuck into a couple of webinars or to read study guides, and put the online event dates in your diary to help you manage your Seren schedule.



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, your teachers, 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. Have the belief and self-confidence that you have the potential to realise your aspirations and achieve your goals!

#Seren ★ #ExploreYourSubject ★ #ReachForTheStars ★ #JustGoForIt

“I will be the first person in my immediate family to go to university, and looking back I can definitely say that being a part of Seren has helped me get to where I am today.”

MY SEREN JOURNEY

Ryan Lenihan
Seren graduate 2021
Law and Politics at Cardiff University

Studying law at university has always been my dream but before joining Seren I didn't have the confidence to apply to leading universities such as Oxford, Cambridge or Russell Group. Now, I have a place to study Law and Politics at Cardiff University after achieving A* AA in my A levels and I couldn't be happier.

I was introduced to Seren by my college, Gower College Swansea, who told me about the resources and support I could access to help my university applications including admissions test prep sessions, personal statement workshops and mock interviews.

To apply for law you have to sit the LNAT (The Law National Aptitude Test), which I was initially nervous about, but Seren offered sessions dedicated to preparing me for the exam which helped me go into it

with confidence and a knowledge of what to expect. Seren offers similar sessions for other admissions tests so I would recommend taking advantage of them.

I was also lucky to be part of my college's Oxbridge programme and HE+ sessions, delivered in partnership with Seren, which gave me tools and tailored guidance to apply to the University of Oxford's Keble College. These included talks from Seren alumni as well as masterclasses on how to draft

a strong personal statement – something I had struggled with before.

Without Seren, I would never have applied to Oxford as I didn't believe in myself. While I did not end up getting a place, being a part of Seren and taking part in the Oxbridge sessions was invaluable as it equipped me with the skills, knowledge and confidence to then successfully apply to other universities.

Seren also gave me access to work experience opportunities within law. Before Seren, I had no access to the legal profession as no one in my family works in the sector. My Seren hub coordinator introduced me to the Lord Edmund Davies Legal Educational Trust (LEDLET) and Legal Wales, a scheme which supports young people in Wales interested in entering the legal profession to get experience and make connections.

I attended LEDLET's 2020 summer scheme which, despite taking place virtually, gave me an amazing insight into a career in law. I received personal mentorship, spoke with solicitors and barristers, and had the

chance to take part in hands-on tasks related to law. A particular highlight was listening to two Welsh judges from the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal share stories from their fascinating judicial careers.

I'm now excited to start my degree at Cardiff University. I'm so grateful to Seren for giving me the boost I needed to apply to top universities and for providing me with the chance to learn about LEDLET and Legal Wales, whose support has been brilliant.

I encourage future Seren learners to make the most of every opportunity throughout years 12 and 13 as they will support you in your studies whatever your subject, and provide you with useful information about your university options. Seren will give you the reassurance that you have what it takes to succeed, so aim high!

“Being part of Seren, I knew that there was always plenty of support on hand for me to access, for whatever aspect of the university application process I was stuck on.”



SEREN

SYLFAEN ★ FOUNDATION

YEARS 8 to 11

Roman chose to complete the science masterclasses in year 10. He felt these were the subjects he needed to work on a little bit more to make the most of his GCSEs. He really enjoyed all 3 courses. He found the content interactive and challenging but felt the lecturers made him feel at ease. Roman was able to use both his skills and knowledge from the masterclasses for his GCSE studies and both he and his teachers saw a considerable difference in the quality of his work.

Roman is now going on to study A level physics, maths and computer science. He is confident about making the move from school to college because of his experience with Seren and the masterclass sessions.

Nicole Davies

Parent of Seren Foundation learner now participating in Seren Academy

The Seren programme is a fantastic opportunity for students to challenge and push their knowledge and their skills. I have the fortunate opportunity to coordinate the activities for Dwr y Felin Comprehensive in the Neath Port Talbot hub and the package that is being developed this year is brilliant. There is something no matter what interests you have. The masterclasses offer deeper and more developed thinking for subjects in GCSE and A level that you may not have studied before. Working with older peers and attending events like debating competitions or seminars can stoke the fire and passion that students have for their learning. As a result, students' understanding, resilience and determination are enhanced when participating in Seren, building proactive contributors to society where individuals are confident, with innovative ideas and solutions.

Mr A Rayson

MAT and STEM coordinator, Science Teacher
Dwr y Felin Comprehensive School

WHAT IS SEREN FOUNDATION?

The Seren Foundation is an aspirational programme for learners between years 8 and 11 at state schools across Wales that supports the development of valuable skills and academic ability at GCSE level.

The aim is to provide support and guidance to enable you to make informed decisions about GCSE and A level subject choices with the long-term view of helping you attain your higher education and career ambitions.

The programme provides inspiration and advice about university options and degree courses, the links to careers across a wide range of sectors, and the potential pathways open to you.

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

Seren will help you develop valuable skills required at GCSE and A level

such as analytical and critical thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and revision techniques.

Resources and workshops have also been created to enhance your communication skills such as essay writing, and how to craft, present, and debate your ideas. All of which relate to the skills required at university and in your future career.

At the heart of the programme is the commitment to expand your knowledge, encourage you to explore and pursue your academic interests, help build your confidence and self-belief, and motivate you to aim high in your GCSE exams and strive to reach your long-term goals.





2021/2022 FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

Throughout the year you will be able to take part in a wide range of activities tailored to your specific year group.

Here's a taste of what you can get involved in...

- Online National Conference.
- Career-based sessions on becoming a vet or medic.
- 'Routes into Languages' courses.
- Workshops led by ambassadors from MIT, for example 'Laws of Motion' and 'Climate Change'.
- National essay and creative writing competitions.
- Stretch and Challenge workshops.
- Subject-specific masterclasses, tutorials and Q&A sessions to super-charge your studies.
- Virtual university and museum tours.
- Careers guidance and advice.
- Online resources to develop your passion for subjects.

You will also receive a reflective journal that will enable you to tailor your own Seren experience and build your pathway to the future.

"Seren is a great platform that I'm happy for my daughter to be part of because it offers great insight and support in her education, and wonderful opportunities for her to participate in various activities including masterclasses, which has helped her to recognise her talents. I believe that the Seren programme will guide my child to make the right choices in her future education."

Theresa Jenkins, mother of year 11 Foundation learner.

DON'T JUST TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT...

Psychology masterclass

"I am now considering choosing psychology A level and this class has generally helped me better understand things about life."

It helped me have a better insight into psychology and also learn how Seren can help me in higher education."

Chemistry masterclass

"I loved how we had experiments to do at home, it was a great way to get us involved online."

The topics were very interesting and it helped with my GCSE lessons. It has helped me gain more knowledge of what I want to do when I am older."

English masterclass

"Masterclasses developed my knowledge of what English would be like in sixth form."

Law masterclass

"I really enjoyed the law sessions, especially the case studies and debates on whether they were innocent or guilty."

Biology masterclass

"It tied things all together and made links in biology that I didn't know before the sessions."

Sociology masterclass

"I really enjoyed it – the masterclasses have helped me to decide on my A level subjects."

Science masterclass

"I attended the science workshops, specifically on flu and vaccination. It was really interesting and I could see how parts of the biology course we are currently studying fits in with this, and also fitted in with what's happening with Covid-19 mutations and vaccinations."



SEREN

ACADEMY ★ ACADEMY

YEARS 12 and 13

“Seren encourages learners from all backgrounds to expand their horizons, aim high and reach their full potential. Since joining the Seren programme, our students have benefitted from so many great opportunities such as subject masterclasses, international summer schools, national conferences, personal statement workshops, admission test preparation sessions and more.”

It's been amazing to see our students acquire the confidence and skills needed to gain places at world-leading universities. As a Head of Sixth Form, the support and guidance provided by Seren has been invaluable and through Seren we have formed so many great partnerships with organisations, universities and employers.

Seren continues to raise the aspirations of our students, encouraging them to seize every opportunity and reach for the stars!

Dr John Roe

Director of Radyr Comprehensive School Sixth Form
@RadyrSixthForm



WHAT IS SEREN ACADEMY?

The Seren Academy invites the brightest and most academically able learners in years 12 and 13 across Wales to join the programme. Learners 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 subjects, which 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 Seren-Jesus College Oxford Residential Summer School in partnership with the University of Oxford.
- Mentoring and live Q&A sessions from academics and previous Seren learners.



SUMMER SCHOOLS

Each year during July and August, Seren offers prestigious summer school opportunities for year 12 Seren learners in partnership with Jesus College, Oxford.

These are life-changing experiences designed to give you a unique and unrivaled chance to experience undergraduate-level study.

Comprising an extensive mix of challenging lectures, seminars, tutorials, essays, and reflective sessions the summer schools will deepen your knowledge and enrich your ongoing study.

The summer schools have helped inspire, motivate, and shape the ambitions of many Seren learners, and previous attendees are now studying at leading universities around the world, including Oxford, Cambridge, Yale, Harvard, Stanford, and Chicago.

Seren International Online Summer School

Hailed by Jesus College, Oxford as its most expansive summer school, it is a demanding two-week online study experience designed to introduce you to the critical ways of thinking required in higher education both here and abroad.

Devised in collaboration with Equal Education Partners, Yale-NUS in Singapore, and MISTI (MIT International Science & Technology Initiatives) the summer school is delivered by world-leading academics, experts, alumni and undergraduates representing many esteemed universities from around the globe.

Structured around eight capstone subject areas, you can select a stream suited to your academic interests and immerse yourself in an extensive timetable of seminars, lectures, and masterclasses.

You will work on a project related to your chosen area, and have the chance to present your final assignment to a panel of eminent professionals and Welsh Government officials - an achievement to include in your personal statement!

An informative range of Q&A sessions allow you to talk with Seren alumni and undergraduates who will provide a unique insight into university life, and a first-hand perspective about applications, scholarships, and the opportunities available to you in Wales, the UK and overseas.



Summer School Lectures

Here's a taste of the undergraduate-level lectures you can enjoy as a Seren learner:

Antimicrobial Resistance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vp3bmEQypME>

Futurology and Super-Forecasting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzDnZQlwoFI>

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

What is Intelligence?

<https://youtu.be/J1BKZ8tDLrM>

Introduction to Astrobiology

<https://youtu.be/YHzg2zKp3yc>

Prepping for Oxbridge interviews

https://youtu.be/Fte48LyBU_U

How do I apply for the Seren summer school opportunities?

Each summer school is highly competitive, but everyone has the potential to make a successful application. Places are offered based on an exceptional personal statement and demonstration of ambition and academic ability.

When applications open, information will be provided by your hub coordinator and school, and announcements will be posted on our social channels, so make sure you follow us!

Seren-Jesus College Residential Summer School

And then there's the flagship summer school hosted by Jesus College, Oxford. Head to the next page to learn all about this incredible opportunity and experience...



The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, with Dr Matthew Williams and learners at the Residential Summer School 2021

RESIDENTIAL SUMMER SCHOOL

The residential summer school hosted by Jesus College, Oxford is our flagship joint event. It is an exclusive opportunity for year 12 Seren learners to get a first-hand, authentic taste of life and study at a world-class university.

Although hosted by the renowned and very beautiful Jesus College, the summer school is not just for those of you interested in applying to Oxford or Cambridge. We want to give you the experience, skills, and knowledge to help you make the best informed decision for your own future regardless of what and where you want to study.

Some of you might not have the confidence to apply to a world-leading university, and this is what the summer school aims to do – give you self-belief that you have the potential to apply anywhere.

What you can expect

The summer school is a week-long mix of exciting interdisciplinary lectures, seminars, tutorials, mentoring sessions, debates, and university-level essay writing set around a core theme. For 2021 it was on ‘Super Powers’ and all things ‘super’!

You’ll stay in the College’s halls, eat in the historic dining hall, and study in the university lecture theatres just like an undergraduate. You’ll also enjoy social time where you can relax in the serene courtyards, make friends with like-minded people, and explore the city, including visits to the famous Ashmolean Museum and Bodleian Library.

What’s on the timetable?

Be prepared for a busy, challenging, but incredibly stimulating week! You’ll be expected to read academic articles and journals before and during the summer school and attendees are encouraged to do their own research to find other relevant readings. The trick to undergraduate study is to love hunting for solutions to the puzzles you face, and to think for yourself.



Here’s just a selection of what was on the 2021 timetable...

Lectures

- “From Bronze Swords to Nuclear Weapons: What it takes to be a Superpower”
- “Superheroes in literature”
- “Chocolate, and other forms of supernormal stimulation”
- “Superbugs and antimicrobial resistance”
- “Super intelligence: On cognitive enhancement”

Seminars

- “Supernatural poetry and the human experience”
- “Programming qubits in quantum supercomputing”
- “Superiority and prejudice in the work of Victorian biologists”
- “Super marketing: The art of advertising”
- “Id, ego, and superego: An introduction to Freudian psychoanalysis”

“One of the most pleasing things to see on this summer school is when a young person who feels unconfident and like they don’t belong at the beginning of the week starts to come out of their shell, starts speaking up in the lectures, engages in the tutorials, and then by the end of the week they walk tall. They feel like they deserve to be here alongside their peers, and that they have what it takes to apply to the best universities.

We know that participants on these summer schools become more confident, empowered, and have more of the skills needed to make competitive applications to the leading universities of their choice. Please apply to the 2022 online and residential summer schools and see where it can take you.”

Dr Matthew Williams

Access Fellow, Jesus College, University of Oxford

There is nothing quite like the Seren-Jesus College Residential Summer School!

Read on to hear from some of the 2021 attendees and discover just why it’s so special...





“I wanted to take part in the summer school because it’s been a dream of mine to come to Oxford, and I know that sounds a bit cliché but my decision couldn’t have been consolidated unless I actually came here.

So when the opportunity arose I had to take it full force. It’s been more than I thought it would be – the atmosphere, the buildings, and the architecture are just incredible. The lectures are so interactive and really get your mind thinking, and the friends you make is just as great.

We’ve been in the lecture theatre discussing all things from antibiotics resistance to computer science to English literature, all things out of my depth but have been really interesting. The highlight for me has been to meet people and Dr Matt Williams in person after such a tiring year. Jesus College will be the one I apply to because even conversations with staff makes me feel like this is a community I want to belong to.”

Holly Murcott

Ysgol Dyffryn Taf



“I wanted to attend the Jesus College summer school to gain an insight into what studying at Oxford would be like and to give myself the confidence to know that it’s not only private school students who go here, there’s room for everyone and it’s a very welcoming place.

Since I’ve been here I’ve enjoyed a range of lectures, seminars, and I’ve written an essay which was a really interesting experience for me because as a maths, chemistry and biology A level student I haven’t written an essay in a long time. It was really good to stretch my brain in a way that I haven’t done for a while.

I definitely recommend the summer school to other Seren students as it’s helped my confidence in public speaking by attending lectures and seminars. The highlight for me is that I’ve got to meet so many incredible like-minded people who see the world in a similar way to me, who come from a similar background, who are high achieving and have high aspirations for themselves.”

Eva Titterington

Ysgol Plasmawr

“I wanted to attend so I could have a taste of what it was like to be a student at one of the world’s best universities, and to see what university itself was like in terms of the lectures and seminars and tutorials.

It’s been incredible to be able to actually experience it, to do an essay and discuss it which is something we don’t get to do at school. I’ve benefitted a lot as it’s allowed me to see what university is like and realise that it is the right choice for me, and I can make a decision off that.

My highlight has definitely been the seminars and discussing topics with people who are experts in that field, writing an essay and practicing those skills, and manage our time effectively. For example we had one on global superpowers and as a politics student that was incredible to be able to talk and ask questions about it that we don’t really get in school. It’s been the experience that I hoped it would be, and by living like a student at Oxford for a week has definitely made me want to apply to Oxford more.

I would recommend it to future Seren students because it’s an amazing experience even if you aren’t actively thinking of coming to Oxford.”

Gwion Rhisiart

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern



“I really took an interest in the summer school because it was a great opportunity to show my skills and to develop within a society of like-minded people, and be taught by academics and experts.

My eyes have been opened as to how things work within Oxford’s learning communities and the fact that it is more focused on how you think rather than on reaching the right answer. That was really interesting to me and changed my mind about the university.

Doing things like the workshops gives you so many new skills and a new way of thinking, so it is a great experience to be here.

Being a Seren pupil has put me in contact with many people, new friends, and given me opportunities like this that I wouldn’t have had.”

Zach Mutyambizi

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf



THE SEREN AWARD



The Seren Award is a challenging and insightful study programme that provides year 12 Academy learners with exposure to undergraduate-level project-based learning and essay writing.

The Seren Award is a valuable project-based programme that develops cognitive skills and supports your transition from A level studies to the demands of university by emphasising critical and analytical thinking, referencing, effective notetaking, and evaluation of data.

Over the course of a week, participants work on a challenging subject area and topic taught by an expert PhD tutor. You attend an academic masterclass and online tutorials, and are set reading tasks before submitting a final assignment, all of which replicates undergraduate study.

Each PhD tutor is currently studying at leading universities in Wales and the UK, and the tutorials and topics are based around their real research, offering you an exciting and genuine insight into the methodology and approach given to university study.

Final graded assignment

After the final tutorial, you will complete an extended final assignment of between 1500-2000 words. By submitting the assignment you will receive a genuine university-level classification and mark from the PhD tutor with full written feedback on your work, which can be valuable in future university applications and personal statements.



“It was an incredible and immersive experience. I feel I now have a better insight into the level of study required of me when I go to university and I now have additional experience in writing university-level pieces, and by gaining practice of that I will be better prepared for when I come to do it for real in just over a year.”

In 2021, the PhD tutors developed a series of masterclasses and tutorials based on their research subjects - see below. This year's research areas will be equally fascinating!

Can we predict dementia?

University of Surrey

English Literature: Are we heading towards a dystopian society?

Cardiff University

The ethics of ageing research

King's College London

Engineering: Is hydrogen the solution for climate change?

Swansea University

Antibiotic Resistance: How can we all solve this problem?

University of Warwick

Your genetics or environmental factors, what has a greater impact on the human body?

University of Bristol

Business and Management: Are coworking spaces a product of 'neoliberalism'?

University of Leicester

Can we solve the global plastic waste crisis?

University of Edinburgh

How do I apply?

Places are offered on merit via an application process. When applications open you will receive a notification from your regional hub coordinator, and via our social channels.

“I was incredibly impressed with the assignments the Seren students submitted! They demonstrated a high level of ability and produced fantastic quality assignments - I was able to award high marks across the board and found myself impressed by the amount the students had picked up during the placements. It was a thoroughly rewarding experience.”

Amber Knapp-Wilson
PhD research tutor



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Amber was delighted to be chosen to be part of Seren. I was of course thrilled and encouraged Amber to embrace the opportunity.

The visits to the universities were a wonderful experience. Our conversations at home were around what would the future hold for her, and the avenues open to her and how could she reach her potential.

Coming from Ebbw Vale, a deprived area with a lack of job opportunities, being involved with Seren opened up the academic world to Amber. The chance to listen to lectures from professionals who had experience and insight offered that realisation that she could achieve the same goals.

I was so proud that she had been selected and her hard work recognised. Subsequently, Amber received wonderful A level results.

I can only commend the Seren programme, it really empowered and inspired Amber.

Karen Williams

Parent of Amber Williams



Amber Williams

Seren alumna

Masters student, Glasgow University

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN EXPECT FROM SEREN

As a parent or carer of a Seren learner, 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 learners 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 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 learners 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 learners 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 learners and alumni 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 40.



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 learner 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 6.

Q Is university the right route for all bright learners?

Seren was established in response to declining numbers of pupils applying to the top universities and is designed to support bright Welsh learners to make competitive applications. With this in mind, Seren's activities are designed to cater for those who are considering higher education. Learners 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, your child does 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 child's hub across the academic year?

Each hub designs its own annual calendar of activities and information is distributed by your child's school or college.

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

Activity developed by each regional hub is designed to meet the needs of the majority. As such, there may be learners 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 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 social media 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 learners also have access to reading lists and follow up activities to do in their own time if they wish. In addition, year 12 learners can apply to attend opportunities such as the Summer Schools.

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 learner 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 is supporting their thought processes in areas including subject choice, applications and admissions advice. Seren's aim is to raise Welsh learners' aspirations and knowledge of university in order to make the most competitive application as possible.



Lisa Vukashin
with daughter Abi,
Seren graduate 2021

SEREN ALUMNI

When a learner graduates from the Seren Academy programme at the end of year 13 they automatically become an alumni.

Since 2016, we have seen 1000s of learners 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 learners' and 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 learners too!

The Yale Young Global Scholars and Jesus College summer schools helped me gain experience and build confidence prior to university through insightful seminars and engaging with fellow students in discussing challenging theories and ideas. Seren also showed me that other Seren alumni like myself can study at Cambridge and other leading universities across the country. I attended a comprehensive school in West Swansea – it's important that young people at schools like mine believe that they can aim high and achieve great things.

Rosa Humphreys
Seren alumna
Human, Social
and Political Sciences
(HSPS) at
Queens' College,
Cambridge

SEREN ALUMNI



Bailey James
Seren alumnus
Law at Durham University

Seren gave me the opportunity to explore my subject area in depth through insightful masterclasses. These sessions helped me gain a greater understanding of law and what a degree in it would actually be like, confirming that it was something I wanted to go into.

Seren's guidance helped me believe that I really was one of Wales' brightest students. Without Seren, I would not have thought I was good enough to get to where I wanted to in life. I certainly wouldn't have had the confidence to reach for the stars and apply for competitive opportunities.

I am now going into my second year of law at Durham University, having completed work placements during my first year with leading law firms such as Allen & Overy, Linklaters and Clifford Chance, where I have since been offered a training contract.

My message to Seren learners is that you are capable of much more than you think. Never say never; you might just surprise yourself if you give yourself a chance!



INTEGRAL TO OUR SUCCESS

“Both of my older siblings have been involved with Seren and they have since gone on to achieve amazing things.

I know that Seren was integral to their successes and it made me more determined to make the most out of the support, opportunities and guidance that Seren offered me when I joined the programme. My high school and sixth form also has a strong relationship with Seren and encouraged us all to make the most of everything available and I'm so glad I did.

Seren has broadened my horizons and offered me many opportunities that I would not otherwise have had access to such as the annual Seren-Jesus College Residential Summer School. I was fully immersed into university life through a schedule full of interesting lectures, seminars and tutorials delivered by leaders in their respective subjects.

It also gave me an amazing opportunity to establish lifelong friendships who were all in the same boat - aspiring to apply and get into the best universities in the world.

Through Seren I attended a whole range of masterclasses and practical sessions aimed at helping strengthen my UCAS applications. These included admissions test preparation sessions, which helped me prepare for the UCAT and BMAT that I needed to sit as part of the application process to study medicine, as well as mock interviews. All of which provided me with an insight into how the actual interview would be, the type of questions I would be asked, and what admissions tutors look for in a student. This was incredibly beneficial as a few weeks after this session, I had my actual Cardiff University interview, which secured me a place to study medicine.

Now going into my second year of university, I can definitely say how Seren greatly supported me to get to where I am. My advice to all Seren learners would be to take every opportunity offered to you. It will enhance your university application and expand your skillset and network.”

SEREN IS INVALUABLE

“Throughout sixth form, I attended various Seren sessions including masterclasses and specialist subject talks on a variety of university courses. I also received one-on-one support from my Seren hub coordinator who offered advice on choosing a university and transitioning to university life.

Seren's workshops on writing a strong personal statement and guidance on university applications helped me gain a place to study maths at University College London (UCL). Before starting the first semester however, I worried I wasn't fully ready to take on three years of studying just yet and decided to take a gap year to give me time to figure out the right direction for me.

After some advice from a family friend, I contacted Equal Education Partners, an education recruitment and training consultancy that works with Seren on summer school opportunities, where I gained employment as a learning

support assistant at Ysgol Llanhari. My role saw me offer Welsh and maths tutoring to pupils and I ended up falling in love with teaching. Being able to support pupils with additional learning needs was incredibly rewarding. I knew then that teaching was what I wanted to pursue so I took on the university application process once again.

Applying the second time round was much easier due to the insights and support I'd received from Seren previously, and I already knew the important things to include in my personal statement.

I am now due to start my degree in Maths and Education Psychology at Durham University and couldn't be more excited. Despite taking an unconventional route to university, I feel more ready to begin my course following a gap year.

Seren will be invaluable in your university journey, whether you go straight after school or take a gap year, and will provide you with a support system that will encourage you whatever choices you make.”



Joseph Hinchcliffe
Seren alumnus
Environmental Science
and Public Policy with
a minor in Spanish,
University of North
Carolina (UNC)
at Chapel Hill

WORK HARD AND BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

“This summer I moved from North Wales to the States to start my dream degree at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill – an opportunity that wouldn’t have presented itself if it wasn’t for Seren.

I hadn’t previously considered studying abroad but after attending the Seren Academy launch event, my eyes were opened to the huge possibilities out there. I networked with representatives from a range of universities around the world, including US institutions as well as Seren alumni who had studied in America themselves.

I also heard about the summer school scholarships available in the US through Seren and decided to put in an application to the Harvard summer school, not really expecting to get in due to the very competitive selection process. As you can imagine, when I heard I secured a place, I was over the moon!

I spent two weeks on campus at Harvard studying criminal law. The experience was incredible – I made plenty of friends and got a taste

of university life and study. Being alongside other talented students reinforced that I was deserving of getting a place and took away the doubts I had about my ability to apply to top universities. It also made me realise I preferred the US curriculum and education style, making me determined to secure a university place in America.

The US university application process is very different to the UK so I took a gap year to do my research and really focus on my applications. At the Seren launch event, I had met Rowena Boddington from the US-UK Fulbright Commission, which is home to the EducationUSA team for the UK, who provide guidance to help UK students apply to US universities.

Applying to US universities was completely new to me so having Rowena’s support was really helpful.

SEREN ALUMNI

Coming from a state school and not being solely academic, I didn’t think somewhere like Oxford, Cambridge or an American Ivy League would ever be an option for someone like me. Speaking to Seren alumni studying at such institutions helped me realise I had what it took and pushed me to keep going.

I ended up receiving offers from Harvard, Stanford, Vanderbilt and UNC-Chapel Hill, which was an amazing feeling. I chose UNC due to its strong sporting community (I’m a keen footballer) as well as the balance it offers between academia and the social aspects of university life. Another key deciding factor was that I secured a four year scholarship from Morehead-Cain, a US-based merit programme which provides full funding for high calibre students to study at UNC-Chapel Hill.

I am the first generation of my family to go to university so getting my place has been a proud moment for us all. Applying to top universities is highly competitive but working with Seren and its partners helped me believe in myself and follow my dreams.

I’m now excited to start my degree in Environmental Science and Public Policy with a minor in Spanish. I’m passionate about climate change and helping build a better future for generations to come, and this degree will blend all of my A level subject interests into one place. Once I graduate I’d like to pursue a career in environmental policy to combine my love of the environment and law.

I’d like to thank Seren for opening up opportunities I hadn’t previously considered and for giving me the confidence to aim high. If it wasn’t for the initial launch event, I wouldn’t have found out about the Harvard summer school, nor would I have met staff and students from US universities, which kickstarted my journey to UNC.

I would advise future learners to try all opportunities offered by Seren. Each will give you valuable skills and knowledge that will help you grow and develop as a well-rounded university candidate. So work hard and believe in yourself – you will get out what you put in.”



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

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 learners [here](#).

Resources for Foundation learners will be launched shortly - information will be announced on our social channels and sent via your hub coordinator.

Choosing subjects and universities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UPFpFRQoa0>

Understand which subjects open up different degrees

<https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>

Why go to university

<https://www.bath.ac.uk/case-studies/why-go-to-university/>

Accommodation and living at university

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8up5XZ62-vA>

A parents' guide to university

<https://www.southwales.ac.uk/study/parents-guide-university/>

Super-curricular reading list suggestions

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular_suggestions.pdf

Join the UK's largest online student community

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/>

Chat with students and staff through Unibuddy

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/student-life/unibuddy>

“Seren’s network of mentors and like-minded learners encouraged me to aim high and stay on track of my goals when applying to university through various masterclasses, talks, and summer schools.

I’ve attended memorable lectures on the aerodynamics of plane wings which stuck out to me as it helped solidify my interest in physics and my decision to pursue it further at university. Seren supported me through personal writing masterclasses, interview prep sessions and mock interviews which, to this day, I can definitely say helped me in my journey to securing a place at Durham University to study physics. ”

Elis Parry Seren alumnus, Physics at Durham University

“As a teaching assistant at the Seren Online International Summer School, I ran a series of presentations and role play tasks designed to get learners thinking critically and learning more about their subject. These included asking learners to create their own intelligence briefings under time pressures, a group discussion around the ethical dilemmas of state action, and a lecture looking at how intelligence has developed in the UK historically. Coupled with the range of other incredible talks and advice sessions available at the summer school, these gave learners a true taste of what university life is like.

It was a privilege seeing the students thrive in that academic environment. To play a part in helping them realise their full potential and witness their personal growth during the two weeks was a personal highlight. The experience cemented my desire to teach once I leave higher education. ”

Eleanor Williams PhD student at Queen’s University, Belfast

“Attending the parent meeting at the launch of the local Seren hub opened my eyes to everything Welsh students had and were capable of achieving with the right support. I know Abi benefitted immensely from the support she received from Seren, be that regular local workshops, entrance exam prep, mentoring from a current Oxford medical student and even mock ‘Oxbridge style’ interviews.

Seren really helps students achieve their full potential and I would encourage all participants to make the most of every opportunity it provides. We are incredibly proud of what Abi has achieved with their support. ”

Lisa Vukashin Parent of Abi Vukashin

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

Oxford University: 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 7.



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 'smart' and click 'Follow' now so you don't miss a thing!



insta-nt resources...

Follow us on Instagram for tips, advice, blog articles, webinars, and more!





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REACH FOR THE STARS