

UCML Executive

Friday, 26th May, 2023

Slavonic and East European Studies Report

YEAR ABROAD

Summary: *The Year Abroad remains a major area of concern, although most universities have successfully found alternative courses to those in Russia. This is mostly for reasons that affect other languages: visas, significantly increased costs and bureaucracy, and changing perceptions of the Year Abroad among (some) students: whereas it was once seen as a major attraction of Modern Languages degrees, it is now sometimes seen as a burden. Some universities are now allowing students greater flexibility as a result; this is a concern for some colleagues, as it has implications for language proficiency in the final year. The increased cost of the Year Abroad may also limit access to ML courses: what can universities do to support students?*

Bath: We are sending our Year 3 students on RLUS programmes to Tallinn next year and one also to FORM in Tbilisi, with whom we have had a good experience this year. We have been given funding to cover tuition fees for them and the subsequent cohort, since our exchange with Voronezh SU has ceased to operate, but I think it very unlikely that this will continue indefinitely.

Durham: We are sending our students to Bishkek, Tallinn and Tbilisi.

Exeter: Year abroad seems to be settling down in the new reality of not going to Russia. Like other institutions in the UK we're looking at Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Latvia, possibly Georgia.

Glasgow: We have partnered with KIMEP University, Almaty, for our students to come and study Russian here.

Leeds: We're continuing to send students to Georgia/Latvia — Georgia has received very positive feedback this year; we've had visa problems for Latvia — and we're looking into other destinations for future years.

St Andrews: St Andrews is a member of RLUS so for next year we are offering students the two RLUS Language Link courses in Tallinn and Astana. We are also looking into setting up new partnerships in Narva and Almaty for future years. But there is real concern about the rising costs of the Year Abroad for students and we are worried that some students are already being priced out.

Sheffield: Our students now have the choice between the RLUS courses in Tallinn and Astana, which are running satisfactorily even though the staff in both centres is new, and Liden & Denz in Riga. Arrangements for Latvian visas have proved troublesome; it seems that students would be well advised to have them when they go to Riga rather than applying for them when they are there.

UCLan (University of Central Lancashire): We are now sending our students to Kazakhstan, as we have excellent collaborative links with a number of Kazakh HE institutions.

VISITING FELLOWSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS WITH UKRAINIAN COLLEAGUES

Summary: *Many Slavonic departments have instituted visiting fellowships for scholars from Ukraine. These have led to seminar series, language classes and some research collaborations.*

Durham: The university organizes The Ukrainian Talk Series run by our colleague Markian Prokopovych from the History Department. Many of these events are organized in collaboration with Zaporizhzhia National University. More information about this partnership is available here <https://www.durham.ac.uk/ukraine/twinning-partnership-with-zaporizhzhia-national-university/>

Glasgow: Other news: we have a CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics) fellow from Ukraine working with us, Dr Olena Taukchi. Her role is quite innovative within CARA's practice because she is a teaching fellow, not a research fellow. (Something made possible by the unique visa situation of Ukrainian refugees.)

St Andrews: My colleagues and I have taken a decision not to work with any institution in Russia that signed the Rectors' letter last year. We are strengthening our, already strong, research ties to Ukraine, including global partnerships with the National University of Ostroh Academy (see below) and the Centre for Urban History, Lviv.

St Andrews' Russian department was recently successful in bidding for a £200,000 grant from the UK-Ukraine (UUKi) R&I Twinning Grants Scheme. We have around 10 colleagues from Ostroh Academy currently with us in St Andrews working on the project 'An Ostroh-Academy-University of St Andrews Partnership for Advancing the Public Humanities and Building Cultural Resilience in Ukraine', which is overseen by my colleagues Dr Emily Finer and Dr Victoria Donovan.

Sheffield: We welcomed two visiting fellows in March, Dr Olha Denkovych, Visiting Researcher in Ukrainian Studies, and Natalya Faryna, Visiting Lecturer in Ukrainian Studies.

CHANGES TO CURRICULA

Summary: *In February 2022, several Slavonic departments were already involved in initiatives to decolonize their curricula. The Russian invasion of Ukraine gave that work particular urgency, and so more institutions have begun to review how and what they teach.*

Durham: We introduced a couple of new units for our modules—Imagined Geographies this year and will be running a block of lectures and seminars on the Caucasus next year for our first-year students.

Many of our students have been choosing topics focused on contemporary geopolitical questions, Russia and Ukraine and postcolonial theory for their dissertations in the recent years.

Glasgow will start offering a beginners' Ukrainian course next year, as part of its 'Languages for International Mobility' strand.

Leeds: We've introduced 3 Ukrainian modules and are looking at rebranding the programme in response to the war in Ukraine.

Sheffield: Ukrainian language courses have been offered this semester by our visiting fellow, Natalya Faryna. A review of existing teaching in Russian culture modules will take place next month.

SSEES: Our decolonizing the curriculum work continues, if somewhat slowly due to the many other pressures on our time. We're still working on the toolkit, and have begun an audit of our modules to highlight examples of good practice as well as areas that need addressing, thinking more generally in terms of inclusivity as well as decolonizing, and focusing on questions such as:

- Who produces knowledge?
- What is the 'SSEES region'?
- How do we teach Russia?
- Where do its minorities feature in our teaching (of language and culture), and how can we make them more visible?
- 'Unlearning' language borders
- Problematizing the idea of standard languages (as well as dominant cultures)
- Bringing in different diasporas and minorities in language-learning materials

This is the first stage of a wider overhaul of our programmes – this is going to take a while, but we are committed to it.

Further contributing to our decolonizing and inclusivity efforts, one of our PhD students, Serian Carlyle, has been awarded a UCL ChangeMaker grant for a student-led project, *Open(ing) Doors: Co-Creating Space for Inclusivity at SSEES*, and is running three staff-student workshops to incorporate student voices in our plans to update our degree programmes and address diversity issues in the field more generally.

Following increased demand, we are also working with UCL's Centre for Translation Studies to provide new Ukrainian options for the MA in Translation Studies.

St Andrews: We are taking steps to decolonise and diversify our curriculum. We set up an evening course this past academic year for students to learn beginners Ukrainian, taught by one of our postgrads from Ukraine. Uptake was healthy. We are also revising the syllabus of existing modules to better reflect Russophone literature and culture outwith Russia.

AWARDS

Durham: Patrick Zuk received a Leverhulme Research Fellowship, which will start next May.

Exeter: Cathy McAteer (postdoctoral fellow on the ERC project led by Muireann Maguire) received a £2k grant to collaborate with #FreeAllWords in their publishing of anti-war (Ukrainian) and repressed (Belarusian) writers. She will be visiting them in Vilnius next month and they'll be coming to the Translating Cultures event in Exeter in July. Cathy also visited Professor Carol Apollonio at Duke University's Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies (funded by her Duke-Exeter Initiator Grant) in April, to give a lecture on her research, and participate in a roundtable on 'Displacement, Migration and Women in Translation' that she had organised with Carol.

Cathy McAteer in conjunction with Muireann Maguire, Natalia Pinazza (both at Exeter) and Bruno Gomide (at Sao Paulo university) won the FAPESP-Sprint grant for their joint research project 'Across the Slavic Atlantic' where we'll be exploring (both in Sao Paulo this August and in Exeter next Spring) the cultural, translatorial links between Russophone countries and the Americas. We're particularly pleased because this was the only humanities project to receive an award – the rest were all STEM.

SSEES: Marta Jenkala (Ukrainian) has been awarded a UCL Education Award in the category of Assessment and Feedback by the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. Marta is now on the shortlist for a UCL Provost Education Award, to be announced at a ceremony on 7 June 2023.

RECRUITMENT

Summary: *Many departments are concerned about student numbers for Russian because of the invasion; decreases have been reported at several institutions, but since numbers have fallen across all languages while interest in Russian remains strong, this does not seem to be a result of the war but part of the overall trend in Modern Languages recruitment. Some reluctance on the part of applicants to take up new languages has been reported.*

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Durham: Our second-year students launched a new journal *Durham Eastern European Review* to which both students and colleagues are invited to contribute: <https://durhameasterneuropeanreview.com>.

Our students under the guidance of our colleague Olga Zobotkina staged *Mistress into Maid* this year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wt9c6pwSlpA>.

PUBLICATIONS

Durham: Patrick Zuk's new monograph *Nikolay Myaskovsky: A Composer and His Times* was selected for an Outstanding Academic Publication Award in 2012 by CHOICE, the publication division of the American Libraries Association.

St Andrews: Mikhail Vodopyanov, Associate Lecturer in Russian, has been working on a revised 5th edition of the popular Russian textbook *Colloquial Russian*, which came out in the last few months (flyer attached). The new edition has introduced modernised language reflecting social and cultural changes in the Russian-speaking world and newly recorded audio material to supplement the book.

SSEES: Svetlana Shnitman-McMillin's book *Георгий Владимов: время рыцарства* has been longlisted for the Yasnaia Poliana prize and the Big Book prize 2023.

UCLan: We also continue to be extremely research active, and our research output includes publications with CUP, Peter Lang, *Russian Literature* (Elsevier, Amsterdam, now renamed as *Slavic Literatures*), and much more.

OUTREACH

SSEES: Our language lecturers, led by Ramona Gonczol (Romanian) and Yordanka Velkova (Bulgarian and Old Church Slavonic), have been awarded UCL Access funding to pursue outreach with heritage speakers of East European Languages. There's more about the project on our [web site](#). Ramona Gonczol is also coordinating the [PROLang seminar series](#), which, among other events, has a symposium on [decolonizing language studies](#) on 25 May. A follow-up event is being planned for the Autumn.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Glasgow advertised for the Dumbreck Scholarship for a PhD student in any area of Slavonic studies, with a deadline of the end of this month.

Adam Fergus: a.fergus@shef.ac.uk
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