



# London Connection

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Issue 4: Summer 2006

Photo: Courtesy of the University of London



## Interview with Sir Graeme Davies

The Vice-Chancellor, Sir Graeme Davies, shares his thoughts on the continuing growth of the External System, and its recent audit and review.

**What do you see as being the signals of change that will affect education in the coming decade, and how will they impact on the future of distance learning?**

I think that during the next ten years a very significant set of further developments wherein the move from conventional, face-to-face delivery of education shifts into what one might call 'mixed mode', which is a combination of face-to-face and distance delivery. Not necessarily long distance delivery – it might often be within an institution. But this idea that you can mix together the traditional method of teaching and use modern technology to enhance the

*“This idea that you can mix together the traditional method of teaching and use modern technology to enhance the learning experience – this must be the way we go.”*

learning experience – this must be the way we go. It's efficient, it allows students both to operate in real time but also to operate in their own time, and that gives so many people who are committed to work and other responsibilities the flexibility that they wouldn't otherwise have.

**The recent Quality Assurance Agency audit report on the External System was highly positive. To ensure the System meets future challenges, a key recommendation was that 'strong academic systems and academic leadership' will be required. How might this be achieved?**

It is an issue which has emerged on a number of occasions. It was partly one of the things that prompted me to set up, in 2004, a

review of the External System. I took the report of the Review Group to the University Council in June. They endorsed the report, and the report has in it a number of recommendations which both change the governance, by creating a managing board, but beneath it a more structured academic board. But it also committed us to putting in place strong academic leadership through appointing a Dean – an academic Dean with a real academic reputation in distance learning – as the strategic leader of the External System. And this is all aimed at us being able to position for the future.

**In terms of maintaining its ability to move with the times, what do you see as being the main challenges that face distance learning in the future?**

When I talked about what I saw as educational developments, I anticipated that

this greater use of modern technological opportunities would be very significant. But this also creates some interesting demands, because you can't just take conventional learning materials and pop them on the internet and expect people to learn from them. You have to think very carefully about the way you craft, pedagogically, the learning materials – and that is a great challenge.

And the second challenge is, if you're really going to improve the learning experience you have to give real, enhanced day-to-day support to the students. Now that can often be very labour-intensive. If you commit yourself, as some of our programmes have done, to online email discourse, then somebody has to deal with all of these

emails and life tells us all that the number of emails you get doesn't decrease. That creates logistical management demands which can be quite difficult to handle: you can easily be swamped. If you're really going to help students you can't give one-line responses, you have to engage with them in a real way. At least you can do it asynchronously so that you have time to think about the answers, and I suspect that many instances will be a sort of 'Frequently Asked Questions' answer: issues that arise from a student in Pakistan will not be very different from issues that might arise from a student in Africa or Brazil or Hong Kong. So in some ways there'll be efficiencies. But overall, dealing with the appetite of modern technology must put some pretty heavy demands on the system.

**The External System has seen enormous growth over the last decade – an increase of 75% since 2000. What further unexploited potential can be harnessed in order to build on this achievement?**

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One of the issues that was identified in the review of the External System was the need to engage with alumni, to engage with current students, to get a better feel for where there are gaps in the market. Where people who are on the receiving end say 'Well I'm doing this course in Law, but it would have been really useful if I could have had something on commercial litigation' this must be taken on board. So you engage with the student body – both the current and the

examinations, are the same people who are doing all those things for internal students. What is different is that many students don't have the day-to-day, face-to-face contact that an internal student would have. In some instances they do, because we have approved teaching institutions in our big markets – Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore – who essentially act as academic agencies, and they give the welfare and academic support that's needed. For others, we're going to have to find ways of

University jargon – was called the summer school. If we can't deliver face-to-face through approved teaching institutions, we send members of staff out for periods of time and invite students in, so that they can spend a week or two weeks engaged in face-to-face discussion.

#### Looking to the future, where do you see the External System in 10 years time?

I would expect to see it with a very sound, sustainable educational base in the markets in which we're currently active. These are particularly strong markets where we have very good relationships with the education authorities in each of the jurisdictions. We, like everyone else, are looking very closely at opportunities that exist in China and in India, and I would expect to see significant growth in those two jurisdictions. In China we're doing it in the main in partnership with other institutions, and we'll probably end up doing the same thing in India. So it is growth in those areas, but also we will need to think a bit more about training needs and continuing professional development needs, in countries where – at the present time – there's probably underprovision. The other area where there is quite a lot of thought and work going on is Africa, where sometimes access to our own programmes is made difficult because of financial constraints. We're working with the World Bank and with other bodies to determine if there are there ways in which we can form partnerships to help reduce the cost to the student with a view to really seeking to enhance access to education. 

I suspect that we'll do a bit more of what – in the old Open University jargon – was called the summer school...send members of staff out for periods of time and invite students in 

graduate body – to ask them 'What is it you want?' You also say to the constituent Colleges of the University: 'You're always changing your internal curriculum, are there new things that you're doing that you could gain benefit from by putting them out into the External System?' But it has to be a conscious, strategic process, not an accident of events. One of the aims of the new governance structure of the External System is to bring in much more strategic involvement of those who are responsible for academic programmes in the Lead Colleges.

#### What plans are there to create a greater synergy between provision of services for external and internal students?

At the present time, we emphasise that the curriculum provision is the same: people who set the curriculum, provide the curriculum support materials, and set and mark the

doing it. And this emerged, very importantly and at a very early stage, in the delivery of the External Laws degree, because the Law Society requires that students of Law must have experience of presenting arguments, of engaging with the community in a different way. So we're now working with the Law Society, through the Laws Consortium, to generate that element of the Laws programme.

But to many of us that's just a precursor, because if we get that right then it gives you a template which you can then start to extend to other subject areas, to other curricula provision. You can't, in a sense, oblige the student to partake of it, but for many students they do get rather lonely and to have an opportunity of a more engaging set of interactions is important. I suspect that we'll do a bit more of what – in the old Open

## 'Breaking the glass ceiling – achieving success on your terms'

17 October 2006 ■ 6–7.30pm Brunei Gallery, University of London, Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG

The University of London invites you to a free evening of discussion and networking. A panel of speakers will welcome your questions, and following the session there will be an informal drinks reception.

If you are a manager, a professional seeking a new direction or a graduate considering which career path to take, this forum is for you. Focusing on career change, work/life balance, and how education – particularly flexible education – can help you achieve success, this evening will provide you with an opportunity to question your perspectives and meet with like-minded professionals.

Our dynamic keynote speaker is Jo Salter. Following distinguished military service as one of only 5 women fighter pilots in the world, Jo has subsequently forged a

successful career in management consultancy and e-commerce. Having also secured an MBA she powerfully combines her practical know-how with a valuable academic qualification, epitomising how continual learning can bolster your personal and professional development. Jo's remarkable insights will leave you feeling energised, inspired and motivated to take charge of your life and drive your career forward.

This is being hosted by the University of London to mark the relaunch of our MBA, developed by Royal Holloway and offered by distance learning.

For more information and to register please go to [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/forum](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/forum)



Photo: Stockbyte

## An open and shut case

For External System graduate John Hicks, a career in farming beckoned. But all that was to change following a particularly judicious decision.



Imagine the following scenario. England in the late 1940s. You're a young man, recently returned from national service, having left school at

18. Your father, a native Scillonian who has by now transplanted the family to Devon, has given up hope that you'll continue to run the family farm. Nor are you showing any clear leaning towards any other kind of career. In desperation, your father makes an executive decision: he articles you to a solicitor. Masterstroke or misstep? Only time would tell.

Jump cut to 1985. Now at the Bar, you've been brought in to argue – in the House of Lords no less – the appeal in the case of *Street v. Mountford*. Followed by every lawyer in the field, the case finally puts to rest decades of shifting decisions about tenancy rights. It seems, with the benefit of hindsight, that in the case of John Hicks QC his father wasn't such a bad judge of aptitude after all.

What's missing from the above snapshot is, of course, an intervening period of intense hard work, including not one but two degrees – the LLB and the LLM – with the University of London External System. John takes up the story:

"Probably within three months of being in articles I decided that perhaps I'd like the Bar even better, although it was obviously quite impossible at that stage as it was very much a public school, Oxbridge-oriented profession in which contacts were essential – and I had absolutely none. My parents had sunk their money in my article fees and expected me to qualify, which I did. In the course of doing my studies as an article clerk my principal encouraged me to take a law degree, and that's what introduced me to the External System."

He took the LLB by a commercial correspondence course, the only requirement by London being a lecture a week at Exeter (before it became a university). In what must have been an incredibly condensed four-year period, he managed to complete both the degree and his solicitor's exams. Having qualified, far from resting on his laurels he thought he

might undertake a Master's degree too. He duly took the LLM by examination.

Looking back, John confirms that gaining the LLB and LLM "probably strengthened my early job applications and certainly enhanced my education and my career, in the sense that I was a more rounded and better lawyer. If I hadn't taken the LLB I would never have done any Roman Law and I think that would have been a lack in my educational background. So it was partly about the idea that without a degree I was missing out on what was then beginning to be part of a reasonably educated person's CV, and partly because I just enjoyed studying."

In terms of his professional career, one of the most interesting episodes was a period (December 1965 to March 1966) spent in the Caribbean which kick-started his lifelong involvement with constitutional drafting. "At that time I was on the General Purposes Committee of the Methodist Missionary Society, who felt that they needed a lawyer to go to the Caribbean to prepare for the granting of autonomy to the Methodist Church in that area. I said 'Why don't you send me?' And they did."

Travelling around the whole of the Caribbean as well as Central America and Guyana, with a young family based in Antigua, John managed to squeeze in study towards his Bar finals (this is not, you feel, a man who shirks hard work). On his return, now in his late 30s, he finally achieved that long-standing desire to transfer to the Bar. Obtaining a pupillage, however, proved anything but easy after he belatedly discovered that his promised pupil-master had taken silk. Fortunately, after a hasty trawl round the Temple, he finally found someone (who turned out to be ideal) willing to take him on. The first person within that set of Chambers who wasn't Oxbridge or public school educated, John remained there for the whole of his practice at the Bar, later becoming Head of Chambers.

Sitting in the High Court for the last seven years of his career, writing the Constitution of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, arguing a pivotal appeal in the House of Lords – John Hicks is one External System alumnus who has unequivocally left his mark.

## Focus on: UCL (University College London)



Founded in 1826 and celebrating its 180th anniversary this year, UCL was the first university in England to admit students of any race, class or religion, and the first to welcome women on equal terms with men. UCL was also the first to offer degrees in English literature, modern European languages and geography and pioneered the university-based teaching of law, architecture and medicine.

Described by *The Times* newspaper as "an intellectual heavyweight by any standard", UCL has built an outstanding reputation for the quality of its teaching and research. Nobel Prizes have been awarded to 18 academics and graduates.

UCL provides the academic direction for three programmes offered through the External System: the LLB (as part of a consortium of Colleges), the LLM (jointly with Queen Mary) and International Primary Health Care (IPHC).

The LLB is the classic law degree long recognised as an international 'gold standard' and has provided the first step on a career route for many thousands of practising lawyers around the world. Offered through UCL's outstanding Law department (a 5-star faculty), the newly updated LLM programme offers a variety of courses, with specialisations allowing you to focus on a particular field of law. The IPHC programme, led by an award-winning 'e-Tutor of the Year' team and aimed at senior clinicians, researchers and policymakers, is the world's first fully online postgraduate degree in primary care. 📄

Further information:

📄 [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/llb](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/llb)

📄 [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/llm](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/llm)

📄 [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/health](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/health)



## Q & A with: Chris Howorth, Director, External & Executive Programmes, School of Management, Royal Holloway, University of London

Chris Howorth talks about the exciting new developments concerning the newly revised, AMBA-accredited MBA programme

**You've been involved with Royal Holloway since enrolling for your BA in Economics and Social Policy at the College in 1992. How has it changed over this period?**

The College has grown quite rapidly. There are more departments – my own department, the School of Management, was only founded a couple of years before I joined the College as a student (although the Social Policy department was a lot older). While I was studying for my undergraduate degree Economics became a department on its own and since then we've seen the creation of the department of Health and Social Care. Student numbers have grown and the student population has changed quite markedly – the College now has a much more socially diverse student body. There are also a great deal more international students.

**You spent some time as an exchange student in Germany. What was that experience like?**

The German experience is what brought me into academia (I was going to return to banking) and gave me my first experience of publishing work. It was great to work in an intensively research-focused environment. Studying for my

Masters at Royal Holloway was a fairly high pressure time with a lot of material to cram in; the time was well spent, however, as it led directly to the appointment to my present department and I am still working closely with staff at Central Middlesex Hospital in my research activities (CMH was the site where I had to do my MSc internship).

**What's the most satisfying aspect of your role as Director of External and Executive Programmes at Royal Holloway?**

Seeing the development of new programmes (such as the MBA/MSc in International Management and our new corporate collaboration with Reed Learning) take shape and come to fruition.

**How important was it for Royal Holloway to receive AMBA accreditation for its newly revised MBA programme?**

This is probably the single most important change that we have made in the eight years I have been in the School of Management. We still have further to go – we hope to go forward with AACSB and EQUIS accreditation over the next three years.

The accreditation process made us think carefully about what we were offering our students and their future employers. We've developed a really innovative programme which blends academic excellence with practical skills, advice and practice. This was only achieved through the contemplation process that we engaged in before our accreditation visit and through the rigorous challenges that AMBA laid down for us during their visit.

**You travel extensively, meeting and advising External students around the world. What's the single most important piece of advice you could give?**

Think carefully about what you're about to undertake. These programmes take focus and dedication if you are to complete successfully. You will need to ensure that family members are clear about what you're trying to do and that they are also committed to giving you the required space and support – but the rewards are fantastic and your sense of achievement at the end of the process will make all the hard work truly worthwhile. ✍️

## Profile on: Student Registry and Despatch

Led by Jonathan Seddon and Pamela Roberts respectively, Student Registry and Despatch are two departments within the External System that work particularly closely together. Registry officers liaise on a daily basis with their counterparts in Despatch to ensure that the process – from registration to sending materials – is running smoothly.

Staff in Registry and Despatch receive registration forms for all new and continuing students, create initial records and check that what's on the form, e.g. contact and course details, is correct. They also deal with student correspondence and assist students with completing their form.

Postgraduate registry officers similarly advise and assist students through the registration process, and provide the Lead College with registration details so that the College can organise tutorial groups for online programmes. The postgraduate registry also arranges for continuing registration forms, current Regulations and any associated documentation to be sent out.

Consisting of seven staff based at Stewart House and eight staff at their offsite

warehouse, Despatch deals with the procurement of textbooks for all degrees. Pamela works especially closely with both the in-house publishing department (as she requires a year's notice regarding which materials are going to be updated) and with Programme Directors to keep abreast of new units being introduced and which textbooks to procure.

In addition to overseeing print orders for study materials – Handbooks, Regulations, Study guides and Readers – Despatch is responsible for the bulk mailing to institutions and Colleges and all other bulk mailing of study materials, and answer any student queries about despatch of materials.

In terms of the annual work cycle, Student Registry handles two sets of students at postgraduate level: academic year students registering in August/September, and calendar year students starting in January/February. The greater part of the Registry's work is concentrated into the five or six months from August onwards. For Despatch, the work cycle starts in May, when continuing registration forms are sent

Head of Student Registry, Jonathon Seddon and Despatch Manager, Pamela Roberts



to students. As undergraduate programmes are rolling – a May and September registration – the bulk of initial and continuing registration forms start coming in at the beginning of August until the end of December, an extremely busy period with up to 500 forms arriving on a daily basis. From November to January, Despatch send out past exam papers, and between January and May receive CIS coursework from institutions and students. This coursework is sent out to examiners, marked, returned, and results released to students.

The introduction of an email alert for all courier shipments 3 years ago helped students to track their consignment as soon as their package left the warehouse. Further developments to these email alerts are currently being planned. ✍️

# Studying as an External student

Staying motivated will be one of the principal challenges that you face during your course of study. We hope that the following may prove useful when things get tough.

## How to stay motivated

A number of studies on distance learning have shown that students who are well-motivated and organized are normally the most successful. It hardly needs stating, but studying via the External System – and the academic rigour which that entails – requires an especially high degree of self-motivation, hard work and commitment.

Over an extended study period, keeping your motivation high may sometimes prove difficult. In addition to setting yourself specific study targets, at difficult moments it may also help spur you on if you keep your long-term goal in mind: a University of London qualification is respected, sought after, and highly regarded worldwide. If you achieve good results you'll join an expanding community of University of London alumni with excellent career prospects. In a nutshell, the hard work will be worth it in the end!

In setting appropriate study goals, many people find the following acronym useful: **SMART**

**SMART** goals are goals that are:

**Specific** – for example, I will study from 6pm to 8pm every day (rather than I will study 14 hours a week)

**Measurable** – for example, I will read five chapters or write 500 words

**Achievable** – for example, I will consult online resources three times a week not five times a day

**Realistic** – it is better to set small targets that you know you can meet, rather than big ones that you know you will not

**Time-bound** – for example, I will finish this essay by Saturday.

It's best to set goals that you are comfortable with. On the one hand, you need to challenge yourself by making your goals difficult to achieve; on the other, they shouldn't be so difficult to accomplish that you find yourself continually disheartened.

In order to set effective goals, it's important that you develop a clear understanding of what you should be achieving.


To do this, make yourself familiar with the specific learning objectives of each topic – this will ensure that you meet the expected requirements. 



Photo: Photodisc

## Thinking of coming to London? Why not visit Senate House Library?



Senate House Library, University of London holds two million titles in collections which focus on the arts, humanities and social sciences. Highlights include:

- outstanding research collections
- access to a range of electronic resources

- modern and historical periodicals – over 20,000 separate titles
- copies of all PhD and MPhil theses awarded by University of London Colleges
- special and historic collections and archive material
- regular, free exhibitions

The Library is available for reference or borrowing, see our website for membership charges. External System students are entitled to a free visit to the Library in the first instance.

For further information about the Library, please visit our website: [www.shl.lon.ac.uk](http://www.shl.lon.ac.uk)

Photo: Courtesy of the University of London

## Institution snapshot:


### Royal Institute of Colombo, Sri Lanka



With a mission statement “to be a centre of excellence in higher education and development research in Sri Lanka”, Royal Institute of Colombo (RIC) has offered teaching for University of London degrees and diplomas since 1990. It has subsequently built up a distinguished record, with its students achieving outstanding results.

RIC continues to maintain the very highest standards, providing education at a reasonable cost and allowing students to enjoy studying in their home country. At present, over 600 students (including overseas students) are studying for University of London degrees in the areas of Accounting and Finance, Banking and Finance, Business, Economics, Economics and Management, Information Systems and Management, Law with Management, Management, and Mathematics and Economics, as well as for the Diplomas in Computing and Information Systems, Economics and Law.

On 17 February 2006 it was celebration time for RIC staff, graduates and diplomates when it held its 8th consecutive Convocation Ceremony to present awards to over 190 students receiving their degree and diploma certificates. A total of 112 students were conferred their respective degrees, recording a success rate of 95.7% in University of London examinations. This success rate included 10 students passing with First Class Honours. Among the 80 diplomates, seven students passed with Distinction, earning scholarship status for the final year in their degree studies at the Institute.

Teaching at RIC is conducted by a combination of lectures, tutorials, assignments and group discussions. Many study programmes are offered on both a full-time and part-time (evening and weekend) basis. In addition to a well-stocked library, including almost all recommended texts and reference books, RIC also has a computer laboratory with the very latest facilities. 

 [www.royalinstitute.org](http://www.royalinstitute.org)

Photo: Courtesy of RIC (Royal Institute Colombo)

# Around the London Colleges

Major scientific discoveries and investigations into social, political and economic issues ensure that academics at the University of London are widely regarded as world-leaders in research.

## Centre for Distance Education short-listed for award

University of London

Centre for Distance Education

The University of London Centre for Distance Education (CDE) has been short-listed in the 'Public Sector Technology Project of the Year' category in the CNET Networks UK Technology Awards 2006. Recognising innovation, application and excellence in technology and business, the awards have fast become the most sought-after industry accolade. Award winners will be announced at the annual CNET Networks UK Technology Awards

ceremony and dinner at the London Hilton, Park Lane on 26 September.

The CDE is a University of London initiative promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing in distance education. It supports the development of expertise in this field at College level and provides a focus for the development of high quality teaching and research in distance education throughout the federal University.

☎: [www.cde.london.ac.uk](http://www.cde.london.ac.uk)

## King's awarded anti-doping contract

One year on from the announcement that the 2012 Olympics will be held in London, the internationally renowned Drug Control Centre at King's College London has recently been awarded a five-year contract to undertake the drug testing on athletes tested under the UK Sport Anti-Doping Testing Programme.

The contract involves carrying out both in-competition and out-of-competition drug testing for UK Sport in order to detect banned substances listed on the World Anti-Doping Prohibited List.

John Scott, Director of Drug-Free Sport at UK Sport, commented: "King's College London has a long-standing reputation for excellence within the world of anti-doping, so I am delighted to have signed this contract. The battle against doping in sport continues to become increasingly sophisticated and it is important we have access to the necessary experience and expertise to help us minimise that threat. King's has always provided this and puts us in a strong position going forward."

☎: [www.kcl.ac.uk](http://www.kcl.ac.uk)

## LSE academic chairs national study

A major independent study which will focus on all aspects of childhood has been heralded as an 'important and ambitious' project by its chairman. Lord Layard, Emeritus Professor of Economics at LSE and a government adviser on mental health issues, said the wide-ranging inquiry was an opportunity to focus positively on the formative years of life, counterbalancing negative perceptions.

The national study aims to understand and address the issues facing youngsters, making recommendations to create a new vision of childhood. It will look at a series of issues from mental health problems and changing family situations like one-parent households, to society's perception of young people.

☎: [www.lse.ac.uk](http://www.lse.ac.uk)

## Birkbeck academics celebrated in new research book

Universities UK celebrates three Birkbeck academics in its recently published book *Eureka UK*. The new publication features 50 years of life-changing research and highlights 100 major discoveries, developments and inventions by UK academics.

Birkbeck's President, Emeritus Professor Eric Hobsbawm is described as being "one of the world's greatest historians. Hobsbawm has charted the complex patterns and mechanisms that transformed the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." Architectural historian Professor Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's architectural guides represent "the greatest endeavour of popular architectural scholarship in the world." Having worked with Crick, Watson and Wilkins on revealing the structure of DNA (it was her ground breaking X-ray images that made the discovery possible) Rosalind Franklin went to Birkbeck where she worked on the tobacco mosaic virus.

Commenting on the book, Diana Warwick, Chief Executive of the higher education action group, said: "Universities UK has worked with universities across the country to produce a lasting testament to the brilliant thinkers whose contributions have changed lives around the world."

☎: [www.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.bbk.ac.uk)

## UCL leads in search for AIDS vaccine

Professor Robin Weiss of UCL (University College London) is to lead a £13.8 million international research consortium in the search for an HIV vaccine. Under the Professor's lead, UCL will co-ordinate an extensive research programme involving scientists in academic institutions and biotech labs across seven European countries, as well as doctors in the USA and Africa.

The grant is part of a £150 million, five-year programme provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to establish an international network of HIV vaccine discovery consortia, known collectively as the Collaboration for AIDS Vaccine Discovery. The Foundation says it wants the programme to transform the so-far unsuccessful AIDS vaccine effort by rewarding individual labs that come up with innovative ideas and helping them develop those ideas.

As new vaccine candidates are created, researchers will test them, share data and compare results, so that the most promising vaccines can be quickly prioritised for further development and clinical trials.

☎: [www.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.ucl.ac.uk)



## Feedback

We would welcome your feedback on this issue and letters/comments for future publication. Please email us at: [newsletter@london.ac.uk](mailto:newsletter@london.ac.uk) This issue (and back issues) of the newsletter are available to download in the 'Current Students' area of our website. You can also choose to receive them via email by visiting [www.londonexternal.ac.uk/newsletter](http://www.londonexternal.ac.uk/newsletter)