



Voronezh  
State University



Voronezh State University:  
A Leading Partner of UK Universities



## Early History (1972-1975)

Voronezh State University was selected by the British Council as a centre for its Study Abroad students in 1970 and the first undergraduates arrived in 1972.

VSU was selected as a classical high quality university because of its breadth of subjects, allowing for many diverse dissertation topics and opportunities for UK students to develop new interests and meet Russian students from a variety of subject-areas.



*"UK Universities have had a strong, lasting relationship with VSU which has endured for nearly half a century (47 years), it is one of the most consistent and stable academic relationships in Europe."*  
Stephen Hagen





However, the deciding factor why the British Council and many UK universities chose to send their students to VSU was the quality and size of its Languages Department, with a special emphasis on teaching Russian as a Foreign Language and its capability in teaching contemporary and 19th Century Russian literature and Russian Area Studies.

The vast majority of British students were undergraduates who came after two years of studying Russian as a major subject at BA Level. Depending on their academic commitments in their home UK university, the period of study abroad ranged from 3-12 months. The majority came for a semester and were classified as 'exchange students'.



## Development of VSU as a Study Centre for UK Students

During the 70s, 80s, and 90s, the numbers of UK students choosing to come to VSU grew rapidly up to 50 per annum.

The list of sponsoring UK universities is long, over 30, and includes universities from every part of the United Kingdom:

- University of Aston;
- University of Bristol;
- University of Cambridge;
- University of Durham;
- University of Edinburgh;
- University of Essex;
- University of Hull;
- University of London;
- University of Oxford;
- University of Portsmouth;
- University of Ulster;
- University of Sheffield;
- University of Wolverhampton.



*Photos on p. 4-5: British students at VSU (1970s)*



It is a testament to VSU's academic prowess and teaching methods that it has been able to manage students of Russian at all levels; some who had started learning Russian at university as well as students with A-levels in Russian who came to university already with advanced Russian.

In 1975, the first UK postgraduates started coming to VSU to undertake research, the first was Stephen Hagen from Durham University who was researching modern Russian short story writers, notably Bitov and Aksenov.

By 2018, over 1000 UK students had studied at VSU for three months or more and have taken away with them a powerful memory of VSU.

*Prof Stephen Hagen, alumnus from 1975, at Honorary Doctorate Award Ceremony*



## Recent History: The British Alumni Group and VSU's Centenary Celebration

In 2017, the VSU British Alumni Steering Committee was formed comprising Stephen Hagen, Derek Averre, and Julia South, which was set up to bring together VSU's British Alumni and celebrate the centenary of VSU in 2018.

It was surprisingly difficult to find and contact VSU's UK Alumni, especially because, in some cases, it was decades after they had left university.

*UK Alumni Reunion 2018*



The British Alumni Group numbered over 20 at the VSU Centenary ceremony, some of whom had travelled to Voronezh for the first time in 40 years! See photographs of the alumni on Facebook page 'Voronezh State University British Alumni'.

This first meeting in Voronezh was followed by a further reunion at Downing College Cambridge in July 2019, which was hosted by Alan Bookbinder, now Master of Downing College Cambridge, and an alum of VSU.

## British alumni and their memories about VSU

### **Julia South, British Alumna of VSU, Sheffield, United Kingdom:**

I came to Voronezh in September 1976 and spent 10 months there. It was a unique experience. It was extremely difficult to visit Russia in those days, and the only way for British students to spend a considerable amount of time in Russia was to go to Voronezh as part of the exchange programme organised by the British Council.

Those 10 months that I spent in Voronezh taught me a lot. I not only learnt Russian, but got to know the Russian culture, the lifestyle, and the value of friendship in Russia. After the Perestroika, for 15 years, I worked on joint healthcare and social services projects run by various British and Russian companies, either state or NGOs. And this work was greatly based on the knowledge I had gained while studying in Voronezh.

### **Catriona Kelly, British Alumna of VSU, Professor of Russian University of Oxford, United Kingdom (studied at VSU in 1980-1981):**

Despite the Cold War and the fact that having contact with foreigners was, shall we say, not entirely straightforward, people were extremely hospitable and I have some very happy memories of days spent in the woods skiing or cycling, swimming trips to the river, joint parties and so on.



**Derek Averre, VSU Alumnus, Reader in Russian Foreign and Security Policy, Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies University of Birmingham, United Kingdom:**



Living in Voronezh and studying at Voronezh State University was a pivotal moment, the kind that forms your personality and influences your whole life. Sharing a room with Seryozha and Kolya, going to parties with my Russian friends, having lunch in a cafeteria, the “Voronezh Sea”... We are all going to remember Voronezh forever.

## Several British Alumni of VSU have become highly successful in their respective careers in British society



**Bridget Kendall:** Bridget Kendall MBE is an English journalist who was the BBC's diplomatic correspondent working for the corporation's radio and television networks. Since July 2016, she has been Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge: she is the first woman to head Peterhouse college at the University of Cambridge.



**Alan Bookbinder** is a British journalist, charity executive, and academic administrator. Since October 2018, he has served as Master of Downing College, Cambridge.



**Catriona Helen Moncrieff Kelly, FBA** is a British academic specialising in Russian culture. She is a professor of Russian at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of New College. Catriona Kelly was brought up in London. Her parents were pianist Alexander Kelly and cellist Margaret Moncrieff.



**Michael Bird, OBE**, is currently the Director of the British Council in Russia and Cultural Counsellor at the British Embassy in Moscow. The year Michael spent studying in Russia influenced his future life greatly: his wife Simone is also a VSU alumna! Michael studied at three universities: Cambridge, Harvard, and Voronezh. He has worked for the British Council, building cultural relations between the UK and other countries, for 34 years. In recent years he has led the UK-Russia Year of Language and Literature (2016), the UK-Russia Year of Science and Education (2017) and the UK-Russia Year of Music (2019).



**Mary Dejevsky**. One of the most influential British experts and commentators on Russia, the EU, and the USA. She has been a foreign correspondent all over the world, including Moscow, Washington, and Paris. She works as an Independent columnist on foreign affairs, and contributes regularly to The Guardian, The Financial Times, and other UK and international titles. Appears frequently on radio and TV. Since 2004 she has been a member of the Valdai Discussion Club. She attends the club's annual meetings with the Russian Government officials. She is an honorary research fellow at the University of Buckingham.





**Tim Whewell** started his career in international journalism, working for the Sheffield Morning Telegraph after reading for a degree in Russian at Oxford University and he then attended the Cardiff School of Journalism. He began his BBC career as a "talks writer" at Bush House, specialising in Russian affairs and has become highly influential. He has a strong interest in the changing face of British society and inter-ethnic relations and worked on a series of reports for the BBC that first highlighted the extent and impact of east European migration to the UK. A former BBC Moscow correspondent, he specialises in foreign affairs, particularly in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Africa.



**Stephen Hagen**, Emeritus Professor, former UK Vice-Chancellor (University of Wales, Newport). He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by VSU in June 2019, where he is a member of the University Board. He studied at Durham University, was formerly a professor at Warwick University & a fellow of Warwick Business School, specializing in educational entrepreneurship. He was awarded an Honorary Professorship by the National Agrarian University of Kazakhstan (2016). In 2014-2016 Prof. Hagen was one of the first Britons to be appointed Vice-Rector at a Russian University (vice-rector for change management at ITMO University).

## Oxford Russia Fund

On January 19, 2007, Voronezh State University and the Oxford Russia Fund (London, UK) signed a partnership agreement. Following the agreement the fund serves as a charitable organisation and annually provides VSU with scholarships for arts students.

On the 3rd of October, Voronezh State University was visited by the representatives of Oxford Russia Fund: Alastair Tulloch, Director and a Trustee of ORF; John Nightingale, a Trustee of ORF; Boris Saltykov, a Trustee of ORF; and Alla Sergiyevskaya, Head of the ORF Representative Office.

In the long history of partnership, over 2,000 VSU students have been granted an Oxford Russia Fund Scholarship.



*Members of the Oxford Russia Fund*

*Prince Michael of Kent visited Voronezh state university in 2007*



## Strategic Partner universities

VSU has a long story of active and fruitful cooperation with British universities.

Within the framework of partnership agreements, VSU's lecturers have many times been invited to teach Russian as a foreign language and translation into Russian at various British universities. Both sides participate actively in academic exchange programmes, invite lecturers, and take part in conferences organised by partner universities. Every year British students come to VSU to learn Russian.

### University of Bath



The University of Bath has been a partner of the Department of English Philology of the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology since 1996. The

University of Bath developed an intensive summer course in English language and culture especially for VSU's students (ELAC). Within the partnership agreement, students from the University of Bath come to VSU to learn Russian and participate in English language classes for the students of the Department of English Philology.

Over the long history of academic partnership

- over 200 Russian students (Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology and other VSU faculties) have studied at the University of Bath;
- over 180 British students have studied at the Department of Russian as a Foreign Language for 1-2 terms;
- 36 teachers from the Department of English Philology have completed academic internships at the University of Bath, thus improving their knowledge and professional skills.





## Aston University, Birmingham

VSU became partner with Aston University (Birmingham, the UK) in 2013, working on a TEMPUS project 544161-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-UK-TEMPUS-JPCR Aston University "Developing

the Teaching of European

Languages: Modernising Language Teaching through the development of blended Masters Programmes". The objective of the project was to develop and implement a distance learning master's degree programme for training the teachers of European languages. The chief coordinator of the project was Dr. Sue Garton, professor of applied linguistics at Aston University. Within the framework of the project, Dr. Garton, as well as her colleagues, Dr Nur Kurtoglu-Hooton, Dr. Muna Morris-Adams, and Dr. Jackie Harding, paid several visits to VSU, participating in scientific conferences, giving public lectures and workshops, and taking part in classes with students of the master's degree programme opened at VSU in 2015. In 2017, Dr. Garton was awarded with the title of the Honorary Doctor of Voronezh State University for her contribution to building up of the partnership between VSU and European universities.

Although the Tempus project was completed in 2017, VSU and Aston University continue to collaborate. In 2018, Dr. Garton was invited to take part in the festive events dedicated to VSU's centenary. Dr. Garton also hasn't stopped her work with the academic staff and students of the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology. In fact, she invited two master's degree students to come to study at Aston University for a full term. She also conducts online workshops for VSU's students and monitors the results of the Tempus project. VSU and Aston University are currently developing plans for further collaboration.



## Liverpool John Moores University



Between 1992 and 2013, following the partnership agreement between VSU and Liverpool John Moores University, the academic staff of the Department of English Philology worked at the Department of Foreign Languages at Liverpool John Moores University, where they gave lectures and ran workshops for postgraduate students. In their turn, researchers from Liverpool John Moores University actively participated in various conferences and events held by the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology. Between 1992 and 1998 the universities ran a student exchange programme.



## Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh



The long history of collaboration between the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology of VSU and the Centre for Translation & Interpreting Studies at Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh), as well as their participation in a joint



European project (JEP – Tempus-Tacis), allowed for the training of highly qualified professionals and the development of the teaching methodology for the programme “Linguist. Translator and Interpreter”. Thanks to this, in 2002 the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology opened a new department - the Department of Theory of Translation and Intercultural Communication, comprising teachers of the Department of English Philology having completed their training at the Centre for Translation & Interpreting Studies in Scotland at Heriot-Watt University. Even after the Tempus project was completed, students from Edinburgh kept coming to VSU to learn Russian, while VSU academic staff were often invited to teach Russian and translation at Heriot-Watt University.

### **Northumbria University, Newcastle**

Northumbria University collaborated with the Department of English Philology between 1990 and 1998. The partnership agreement between the universities included annual academic staff and student exchanges, joint research projects, and scientific conferences.



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE



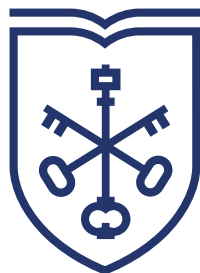


## Academic cooperation impact

- New courses and teaching methodology have been developed;
- Academic staff of are closely involved in sustainable bilateral cooperation;
- Graduates of the English Philology;
- Department with a UK study experiences are highly employable (universities, state and private businesses, government bodies);
- Graduates with non-linguistics degrees who improved their English language skills through academic exchange with British universities are in high demand by the employers (science, mathematics, computer science).







*Address: 1 Universitetskaya pl.,  
Voronezh, 394018, Russia  
Fax: +7 (473) 220-87-55  
Email: [office@main.vsu.ru](mailto:office@main.vsu.ru)  
Twitter: [@vsumain](https://twitter.com/vsumain)  
Website: [www.vsu.ru/english/](http://www.vsu.ru/english/)*