The Institute of Continuing Education, or ICE, is part of the University of Cambridge, one of the world’s leading research institutes, where our purpose is to provide accessible, flexible and meaningful education to adults throughout their lives.

Irrespective of whether you’re taking your first steps in higher education or progressing to mid-career postgraduate study, ICE’s aim is to form supportive communities of learning where expert teachers and adult students work together as peers to achieve personal and collective educational goals.

Study at ICE is characterised by friendly groups of committed students engaging with important learning against the backdrop of the resources of one of the world’s best universities. We promote evidence-based exploration, critical enquiry and free speech in welcoming and respectful classes. ICE is a place where professional networks are formed, friendships are made and learning is cherished.
Welcome to Inside ICE

Welcome to the Long Vacation – Michaelmas Term issue of Inside ICE. As we pause momentarily in the depths of the summer, the mercury is touching 36°C in Suffolk as I put pen to paper, it is timely to reflect on the impact of the pandemic and look forward to the future. When the news first broke in January of this novel zoonotic virus, it took me back to my undergraduate microbiology lecturers in the mid-1990s. Even 25 years ago, my tutors proclaimed to sleepy lecture theatres that we were ‘long overdue’ a pandemic!

In March, ICE courses moved swiftly from in-person delivery to remote forms of teaching. Students, tutors and programme teams tirelessly worked together to ensure that award-bearing teaching could continue. Only a handful of cohorts elected to defer; this was unavoidable in some cases as students and/or teaching faculty were healthcare professionals and other key workers tackling the pandemic on the front line. Additionally, whilst our in-person International Summer Programme was cancelled due to the virus, a Virtual Summer Festival of Learning was designed and delivered with over 2,300 course enrolments. I would like to pay tribute to all our students and my colleagues for their resilience and their unswerving commitment to lifelong learning for professional and personal enrichment.

Madingley Hall was closed to the public in March and unfortunately some short courses and our Award Ceremony were cancelled. However, the Hall team ensured that our facilities should remain open to NHS key workers who could not return to their homes. This was a courageous and civic act. In more recent weeks, the Hall has hosted further in-person training for critical workers and have also launched new services such as food delivery, a new outdoor café and garden tours.

As we look to the future, we are continuing to grow our course offer in areas as diverse as data science, architecture, writing for performance, politics and classics. Enrolments on 2020-21 academic year remotely delivered courses, supported by the Cambridge Thousand Futures Bursary Programme, are performing strongly. Nonetheless we are forecasting a £3 million loss due to lost revenue resulting from the pandemic. In this regard, we have been humbled by the range of donations that have been made to our James Stuart Endowment Fund to support adults to access higher education and our Hall and Garden Fund. We are incredibly grateful for your ongoing and generous support.

I hope that you and your families stay safe and well and we look forward to welcoming all of our new and returning students to ICE in our virtual classrooms in the autumn or in-person when regulations allow.

Dr James Gazzard,
Director of Continuing Education,
University of Cambridge
Institute of Continuing Education

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If you have a story that you think others might be interested to hear about in the next edition of Inside ICE, we’d love to hear from you. Please get in touch via insideice@ice.cam.ac.uk
It’s been a difficult and disruptive period for everyone, but with the start of a new academic year fast approaching, we’re delighted that ICE is open for business – with a few tweaks. Director of Academic Centres, Dr Corinne Boz, takes us through what’s new for 2020-21 and how the Institute is determined to maintain the spirit of the renowned ICE learning community.

ICE award-bearing courses 2020–21

— remote but connected

In one sense, the restrictions and dilemmas we all currently face mean business as usual for us here at ICE. We know that learners come to us wanting to study on a part-time basis while juggling other, significant responsibilities, so we’re used to people’s real and complicated lives. Whether they’re accessing higher education for the first time, returning to learning after a long break or looking for support in changing or progressing their careers, ICE’s students are often confronting important, personal transitions.

That won’t change, particularly as more people look to develop additional skills for newly arising employment or life challenges, and neither will our capacity to support students through those transformations. We remain committed to providing access for, and interaction with, all those who are motivated to engage with learning. We support equality, diversity and inclusive practices and our focus on community helps make studying here so rewarding.

Assessment at ICE is already primarily carried out through ongoing assignments, presentations and portfolios, so little will change in that regard. Similarly, we’ll always provide the academic rigour of a University of Cambridge award.

“...we think students will love how rewarding and connecting a well-managed remote learning community can feel.”

Dr Corinne Boz
A not-so-new way of teaching

What will be different for many this year is the mode of teaching. We’ve worked hard to make things as straightforward and certain as possible for this year’s students. That means all one-year undergraduate courses will be delivered remotely for their full duration. Postgraduate courses will also begin this way for the first term, but we intend to resume in-person teaching once public health guidelines permit it and we’re certain it’s safe to do so.

We already do lots of online teaching and learning, so this isn’t something new to us either academically or technologically. We have a decade’s experience developing online courses, and our well-regarded online learning environment brings people together from otherwise distant locations. All our tutors and course directors have done incredible things over the summer to make sure this year’s courses are just as engaging and rich as ever while being specifically designed with that remote mechanism in mind.

As we do every year, we’ve thought hard about how to balance the amount of learning that’s delivered live to a whole class against the volume of material learners can access at their own pace. We always want our courses to be as flexible as possible around the competing demands on learners’ lives.

Protecting the celebrated ICE learning community

There’s one thing our students, past and present, tell us all the time: the sense of belonging and community they earn from engaging with their peer network is a prime benefit of studying at ICE. It’s of crucial importance that we capture that spirit in our remote delivery. Students will be able to participate in wide-ranging discussions and debates with both academics and peers in our long-established virtual learning environment. We’ll focus on this experience just as much as the learning itself, and we think students will love how rewarding and connecting a well-managed remote learning community can feel.

Even if our students aren’t here at Madingley Hall with us, they’re certainly not alone. We’re highly experienced at supporting our learners, wherever they are in the world. Our teams are here to help with all sorts of issues, from managing study alongside busy lives to using and getting the best out of the technology we employ. With course directors, tutors and programme administrators on hand throughout, we’re convinced this year’s students will get the same buzz and intellectual stimulation as they’d expect from ICE at any other time.

Learn more

To find out more about our upcoming part-time, remote delivered, award-bearing courses at ICE, visit: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/qualifications

The deadline for undergraduate courses starting in Michaelmas term is 14 September 2020.
Dr Lydia Hamlett’s new book, *Mural Painting in Britain 1630–1730: Experiencing Histories*, was published by Routledge last month. Here, Lydia shares her close-up perspective of the Baroque period’s painted architectural interiors – and shares some fine examples to admire from the comfort of your own home.

While the word comes from the Latin for “on a wall”, murals can be found on any architectural boundary – including ceilings and floors – painted directly onto the building’s surface or onto a canvas that’s inserted into a dedicated space.

Art in the Baroque period is characterised by a greater realism and emotional pull that connects the work with its audience. For British murals, this expression begins with Sir Peter Paul Rubens’ stunning ceiling canvases in the Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace and closes with Sir James Thornhill’s epic, 19-year-long commission at the Royal Naval Hospital in Greenwich. It’s a time when ceilings and walls frequently became part of a single artwork or narrative.

From grand beginnings to disrepair – and recent salvation

There can be a tendency to view such pieces as static objects, but in presenting modern interpretations of British life, murals were far more than simply wallpaper. Audiences understood
them within the context of the time, and many murals were grand talking points for groups of elite friends to experience together, conjuring up distant battlefields, mythological landscapes or even apotheosis, as ceilings ‘opened up’ to heavenly vaults.

Yet mural painting has a history of being undervalued. Largely painted by European migrants and therefore not seen as part of the British story, murals were frequently disregarded. In comparison to the grandest works at European palaces such as Versailles, Britain’s murals were sometimes considered second class, and in later years became divorced from their original setting or covered over with more fashionable design.

Now though, that’s beginning to change as appreciation of their worth grows. After often falling into centuries-long disrepair, Baroque murals are now the subject of much conservation work – Thornhill’s art at Greenwich has recently been gloriously restored, for instance, and a major project to renovate Rubens’ canvases at Whitehall is also upcoming. Works such as these provide outstanding opportunities for us to learn about our past, religion and classical mythology, as well as insights into the patrons who commissioned them.

For example, Sarah Churchill, famously portrayed in the film *The Favourite* as Queen Anne’s confidante, was a highly significant commissioner of mural paintings at her homes. Her hires included the Versailles-trained Louis Laguerre, despite the apparent contradiction of Laguerre being one of Louis XIV’s godchildren while Churchill’s husband, the Duke of Marlborough, led Allied armies into battle against the French King.

Appreciating murals in their place

Murals regularly adorn the stately homes and palaces that, in more normal times, we have the chance to visit, but they can be harder to view than the paintings hanging in galleries because of their size and location. Very often, decorative artists guide viewers through a space in concert with the building’s architecture. So as you enter a room, your eyes naturally guide you through the images in the structured way the painter intended.

While, in general, there’s still huge, untapped potential for enhancing visitor experience, organisations preserving the nation’s landmarks are increasingly finding more innovative ways of helping us engage with murals. Some put mirrors on the ground for us to view ceiling images in close-up, while others arrange bean bags on the floor, giving time and comfort with which to pause and reflect on the works above us.

Learn more

To access online resources about British murals, visit: www.britishmurals.org

To find out more about upcoming ICE courses in History of Art, including our Undergraduate Diploma in History of Art: British Visual Culture, visit: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/visualculture

Cambridge Thousand Futures Bursary

The new Cambridge Thousand Futures Bursary aims to support those adults who have been most affected by COVID-19 by providing more affordable access to higher education.

The bursary will give 1,000 people a bursary of £1000 towards undergraduate study in 2020-21.

For more information and to apply, please visit www.ice.cam.ac.uk/one-thousand-futures
At the start of the year, LinkedIn published a report spotlighting creativity as the soft skill most in-demand by global employers. But, asks ICE’s Academic Director for Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies, Dr Alexander Carter, what does it mean to be – or not be – creative? And can the challenges we’re currently presented with inspire fresh creativity?

Rediscovering play could be one answer. As children, we take play seriously. Yet, at the same time, the play is temporary. A 14th Century child with a toy knight knows the figure isn’t real because they can snap out of their game. But if they grow up to don the armour and ride into battle, they would say they’re a real knight. What’s the difference? Well, the child knows that it’s a game.

This is why some creatives play with the rules of their particular game; even if this means deliberately imposing barriers to creativity itself. For example, George Perec’s 300-page fiction about a missing friend, A Void, was, astonishingly, both written in French and translated into English without using the letter E. In this way, Perec turns the blank canvas into a pre-defined space for his ideas.

Creativity – the most in-demand skill of our time

Today, we often think of people as creators, constantly coming up with new ideas, but it’s taken us a long time to reach that point. Creation was originally the sole preserve of Gods. By the time of the Enlightenment, geniuses like Newton and Kant were thought to owe their genius to divine inspiration. It wasn’t until the last 100 years, or perhaps since the first usage of the word ‘creativity’ in the 1950s, that the idea of everyone being able to create became accepted.

Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist – Picasso

Of course, that doesn’t mean we all view ourselves as capable of creative genius. There’s a notion that ‘truly’ creative people must be anarchic disruptors and rule-breakers, and if we don’t see ourselves in that mould then we believe we can’t participate. But often, the biggest barrier is the complete blankness of the canvas. How do you start ‘being creative’?

Creativity-as-problem-solving in challenging times

The present imposition of rules coupled with demand for novel responses to difficult situations may help encourage a purposeful, serious play that fuels creativity-as-problem-solving (which is far from its sole purpose). In this sense, creativity might mean finding treatments and vaccines, or it might mean finding ways to teach and entertain the kids while also getting some work or study done.

We’re seeing people utilise this kind of creativity to overcome all sorts of different barriers right now, such as with Matteo Zallio’s new Handy. Matteo’s a design thinker who’s been considering how the transmission of global diseases is accelerated through human contact with infected objects.

From this inquiry, Matteo has created the Handy, a multipurpose tool that allows us to open and close doors, carry shopping, press buttons on cash machines and so on without touching any
shared surfaces. The Handy is open source and can be 3D printed – or even cut out from old cardboard boxes by anyone using the instructions freely available on his website. It’s a beautiful example of how a need has been created by a set of rules during a tough time and driven an inspiring, creative response.

Learn more

For more details of Matteo Zallio’s Handy, including free models for 3D printing and templates for DIY construction, visit: www.matteozallio.com/handy

Are you interested in studying the subject of Creativity? ICE offers an Undergraduate Diploma in Creativity Theory, History and Philosophy, led by Dr Alexander Carter. To learn more visit: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/ug-dip-creativity

Help us to make Cambridge education accessible to all

Our purpose at ICE is to provide accessible, flexible and meaningful education to adults throughout their lives, whether they’re studying for personal, social, societal or professional reasons.

Accessible and affordable forms of higher education have never been needed more as learners seek to engage with safe ways to study in order to renew skills to respond to emerging economic challenges or learn as part of a wider approach to personal enrichment and mental wellbeing.

We recognise that the costs of studying at University can be challenging and we are continually striving to remove or reduce this potential barrier to learning with us. If you would like to support our aim to prioritise and enable learning throughout life and to promote the widest possible access for learners to the University, you can do so by making a general donation to the Institute or to one of the funds outlined on our website.

ICE alumnus Matthew Lynus spoke to us about his recent donation: “I’m committed to lifelong learning, and I believe that this is best done within a framework where one can question their knowledge and continue to grow. ICE opens up possibilities for meeting such ambitions, and it is my wish to leave a legacy so that these opportunities can be afforded to others who, like me, are advocates for lifelong learning.”

We are hoping to make 2023 a year of celebration. The Institute will be celebrating its 150th anniversary and the University’s Summer Programme, delivered by ICE, will reach their landmark 100th year. Whatever the year it is worth reflecting on the ways in which you might be able to support us and help us to support our students.

All gifts, large or small, are very gratefully received.

Learn more

Find out more about how you can support us at: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/about-us/make-donation
It was a sad day in mid-March when Madingley Hall temporarily closed. But that closure lasted little more than a week. Head of Hall Operations and Estates Development, Ian Hardwick, tells us about a busy and unusual few months for the Hall team.

“When we closed, we donated the Hall’s stock of food to Jimmy’s homeless shelter in Cambridge,” begins Ian. “It felt good to be useful. Then we started to appreciate the strain COVID-19 would put on the NHS. Tired doctors and NHS staff would be travelling back-and-forth to Addenbrooke’s Hospital at all hours. Rather than returning to their homes, we could keep our facilities open as a place for them to rest and relax.

Once we floated the idea, it didn’t take long to arrange the details with the local NHS Trust, and by the end of March, hospital staff began moving into Madingley Hall.

A safe space for NHS and Hall staff

A core team of Hall staff pulled together to help out. The Operations team took turns working 12-hour shifts staffing reception, while the Chef team prepared fresh food on-site every day. Safety was paramount, so meals weren’t served in-person. Guests simply picked up a well-stocked breakfast bag on their way to work and an evening meal later on. With COVID-safe cleaning and laundry services also included, all NHS staff at the Hall could focus on using the time and space to unwind – take a shower, stroll around the gardens or catch up on some hard-earned sleep.

All the hospital workers who stayed in the Hall’s single-occupancy, en-suite rooms – there were up to 28 guests at any one time – were either shielding vulnerable family members or resting nearby in lieu of long commutes, so Madingley was a valuable resource for protecting the health and welfare of NHS staff and their families.

“It’s been non-stop; a really challenging time for everybody...But right across ICE, from the Hall team to our extra volunteers, people here have pulled together ... for our community.”
“We wanted to provide the best, and safest, service possible,” says Ian. “Colleagues across ICE pitched in, volunteering for support shifts. It was great to see people coming together. We encouraged staff and their kids to draw rainbows and write messages of support to display in the reception area.

“When the Addenbrooke’s staff left in May, we were humbled by some lovely feedback about how safe and relaxing the environment felt. Our guests left ‘Thank You’ cards and boxes of chocolates for the team and told us they were sad to move on.”

Delivering for our neighbours

Having realised how much they could offer the community, the Hall’s staff wanted to continue being of service. So in May, they launched a food delivery and takeaway business.

“Everyone wanted to keep contributing,” recalls Ian. “We spoke with local people and knew that some were too worried to go to the supermarket and couldn’t get online delivery slots, so we figured we could help them.”

Making the most of local suppliers, Madingley Hall staff began deliveries to surrounding villages. From freezable ready meals to meat and veg boxes, the Hall food hampers contained much-needed supplies for local villagers – and some little luxuries too. The Hall’s team of Chefs also set about preparing hot food for takeaway and delivery, including beef and plant-based burgers, curries and the ever-popular fish and chips.

“From the Food and Beverage team to the Madingley Hall shuttle bus drivers who are normally ferrying people back-and-forth to Cambridge station, everyone was out delivering,” says Ian. “I’m proud of the whole team for the hard work they put in to create a valuable and successful community resource.”

Pop down to the pop-up café

Home deliveries are continuing, but with lockdown restrictions slowly easing, July saw an outdoor pop-up café launched in the grounds at Madingley Hall. Open from 8am to 4pm, seven days a week, the dog-friendly café even has a marquee in the garden so that coffee catch-ups can go ahead whatever the weather. The marquee can also be hired out for private events.

“It’s been non-stop; a really challenging time for everybody,” accepts Ian. “But right across ICE, from the Hall team to our extra volunteers, people here have pulled together to create a fantastic experience for our community. Now the café is up and running, and the gardens have reopened and look fabulous thanks to the Garden team’s efforts throughout lockdown. We’re honoured to have been useful during a difficult time.”

Learn more

To find out more about home deliveries, the pop-up café and other services at Madingley Hall, visit: www.madingleyhall.co.uk/
Writing Assignments: Preparing for Success

David Galbraith, ICE’s expert study skills tutor, guides us through the best way to approach an assignment.

For those new to study or returning to it for the first time in many years, writing an academic essay can be the most daunting barrier to overcome. But with good planning, it doesn’t need to be as frightening as it may seem.

Structuring an essay

Once you receive your assignments, sub-divide your course period into the amount of time you have. So, for example, if you’re enrolled on a 12-week course and have two assignments, it may help to consider that you have six weeks for each piece of coursework.

Continuing that example, think about how you might break down that period for writing an essay or report. Most academic writing consists of an introduction, main section and conclusion. An introduction might consist of roughly 10% of your word count and therefore your time. A main section is probably around 80% while the conclusion makes up the remaining 10%. So, if you’re planning for a six-week chunk of work, that equates to a week on the introduction, a week on the conclusion and four weeks on the main body.

Deconstructing your question

When you receive an assignment topic, the first thing to do is deconstruct the question. That means highlighting keywords for emphasis so that you know how to target your reading and planning. Here’s an example: “How far do you agree with the claim that trickle-down economics has been a core feature of Republican Party politics in the USA since the 1980s?”

Here, the key terms are “Do you agree”, “trickle-down economics”, “core feature of Republican Party politics” and “since the 1980s”. That gives you four chunks to get stuck into, as opposed to simply going at it all in one go, and means that when you turn to your reading, you’ll know what you’re looking for from the outset.

Develop a plan and check your output

A plan can be in linear form or spider diagram, it doesn’t matter. Either way, begin without doing any reading at all. Just jot down what occurs to you in a very provisional plan. And then, as you go through your reading, you can tie up those chunks with the right places to look in each book and fill out or filter out that plan accordingly. Towards the end of the process, it’s important to do a very rough plan and use it to timetable your writing thereafter. At this stage, it can just be bullet points that lead you towards your next, and eventually final, draft.

What you’re looking for from a well-written assignment can be subdivided into a checklist of seven areas. It should:

1. Answer the question – not the one you want to answer but the one that’s been asked.
2. Identify and address key issues raised by the question and its topic area.
3. Stay relevant to the question and not waffle.
4. Be analytical and discursive rather than merely descriptive.
5. Present an argument which is logically developed throughout with effective use of evidence.
6. Display clear thought and careful planning and, ideally, some creative thinking too.
7. Be fluent and succinct with its sources fully and accurately cited using the required referencing format.

If you’ve done those things then that’s what all the planning was for and you know you’ve done all that you can.

Right now, it’s easy to get swept up in the tension and pressure that comes with the current uncertainty. But planning in this way is all about giving yourself confidence. And don’t forget the reasons why you’re studying in the first place. Remember to enjoy it, be stimulated by the experience and understand that your tutors are right behind you.
Stay and study well – a counsellor’s advice

We spoke to Carol Harmston-Dean, experienced mental health counsellor at JHD Counselling, to get her insight into strategies for staying – and studying – well during this challenging time.

1. **Keep connected**
   When you’re not busy studying, you need to reserve some time to be with far-away friends or those in your household. Try technology like Zoom and Skype to connect ‘face-to-face’ with distant loved ones.

2. **Stay positive**
   Aside from following government guidelines, what’s happening now is out of your control. If you find that juggling study with the rest of your life leaves you stressed, talk to people. Meditation is helpful to maintain your focus, and apps like Mindmatters help you see the positives.

3. **Get your sleep**
   It’s very easy to tack your coursework on to the end of your regular day and go to bed late. Try to build study into your daytime schedule and tire yourself out through the day so you can be well rested at night.

4. **Maintain a routine**
   Don’t sit in your pyjamas at lunchtime; study in 90-minute bursts with breaks in-between. Give yourself an hour for lunch and take breaks away from your desk. Finish at a reasonable time and use one break for exercise. If you have kids and need to concentrate on some reading or an assignment, set them a solo activity for an hour or so, and tell them that you’re working together but independently.

5. **Do something just for you**
   Bake bread, read a book, take a bath, colour something in, put your make-up on… reserve 30 minutes to an hour that’s focused solely on your self-care and isn’t anything to do with your course.

6. **Stay active**
   Even with a deadline looming, you need to get up and about at some point. Take the dog for a walk or go for a run but remember the need for social connection. Do online or TV exercise classes or another activity that connects you with the members of your household.

7. **Set yourself a challenge**
   Targets are helpful to keep you moving forward. Perhaps aim to read 20 pages of a textbook or write 500 words for your essay in a set period. If you’re currently between courses, you could even learn something new from ICE’s range of online courses.

8. **Stay on top of things**
   Try not to put tasks off. Counter-intuitively, it can seem harder to motivate yourself to do your coursework when there’s nothing else to do. But delaying things can lead to anxiety because you feel a failure for not having done what you think you should have.

9. **Limit your news updates**
   Concentrate fully on your studies and catch up with what’s going on by, for example, watching a single daily news programme. Otherwise, you’ll be consumed by the wrong focus.

And finally...

**Be kind to yourself**
In the real and messy world, even in your most perfect state of flow, ticking off these nine tips all day, every day isn’t going to happen. If you try to set a child a solo activity, they’re not always going to comply. If you try to set aside time for yourself, sometimes there won’t be enough hours in the day. If you’re balancing study, work, childcare and everything else, you might not remain permanently upbeat. Nobody else expects that from you and neither should you.

If you’d like to talk to someone about any of the issues raised here, Carol and her team offer remote consultations for students on award-bearing courses at ICE.
Life in lockdown with Dr Chris Smith

Dr Chris Smith works as a Consultant Virologist at Addenbrooke’s Hospital and is the Public Understanding of Science Fellow here at ICE. He is also the founder of the Naked Scientists. Created and launched in 2001, the Naked Scientists was one of the first podcasts and is now one of the world’s most popular science shows. Here, he shares how his career began and how he has been managing his time between NHS worker and broadcaster since the pandemic broke out.

How did you get into your field?

“My career is a strange one. After starting out as a medical student, I very quickly became hooked on science and research, adding an extra degree and then a PhD into the middle of it. It was during my PhD that I started making radio programmes and podcasts. I noticed a gap in the market; there wasn’t very much on the TV or radio that would have attracted the young me in the same way I’d been captivated by inspirational science communicators and I really wanted to change that. The podcast grew an international following pretty quickly and we are now well north of 120 million downloads of our programmes around the world.”

How have you spent the last few months, balancing life in the lab and the studio?

“We’re now in a situation where we have the world in the grip of a pandemic and I’m in the slightly unique position of being both a virologist and a broadcaster; of being someone who knew what they were doing medically but also knew how to put the points across to the public.”

“Never before has the role played by Universities, researchers and science and their importance to society been more visible.”
I’ve been working professionally in the field throughout the pandemic, helping to manage the hospital and local health authorities’ responses to coronavirus. Working as a virologist in Addenbrooke’s has been crazily busy, but we were slightly more prepared than we were with the swine flu pandemic of 2009. We were able to cut the routine work and put all our resources into coronavirus testing straightaway.

Having bought ourselves some time, we’re now spending a lot more of our days in meetings than we are physically picking up test tubes and pipettes. The challenge now is planning scenarios and brainstorming how we’re going to run things, what policies to put in place and how to try to minimise the impact of this as winter approaches and coronavirus returns flanked by the usual seasonal suspects, like flu.

On top of this work, I’ve been doing a huge amount of broadcasting. Soon after the pandemic came about, it was clear that people wanted accurate and trustworthy information about what was happening. We began communicating this through our own programme, translating content that was literally coming straight off the journals and putting it out into the public space very, very quickly.

Of course, every other programme wanted to do this too. Never in the history of broadcasting has a pathogen had its own network level radio programme, but several channels quickly turned over their airtime to coronavirus. When 5Live found themselves with three spare hours on a Saturday afternoon, the slot usually reserved for football, we created the common-sense coronavirus call-in. Colin Murray and I had never met but we did this every Saturday for three and a half months. I was in my studio at home and he was in his flat in London, we couldn’t see each other and neither of us knew what the other was going to say so it was a pretty chaotic mix.

You never know what’s going to come up or what people are going to throw at you. I had never done broadcasting like this before but it was an enormous confidence boost and a really amazing learning experience.

Do you think the public has become more engaged with science as a result of the pandemic?

“Yes I do. Never before has the role played by Universities, researchers and science and their importance to society been more visible. The public are aware that the reason we know everything we do about this, and the reason we are ultimately going to get out of this is largely because of science and medicine.

People are getting to see what it is that scientists do. We’ve had a whole panoply of disciplines, very much front and centre in the news. To the credit of the media, they haven’t held back. They’ve found high quality scientists, science reporters and commentators and put them up front to get their message across.

Learn more

If you would like to find out more about the courses we offer here at ICE, including our Postgraduate Certificate in Practical Science Communication and Undergraduate Certificate in Infectious Diseases, visit www.ice.cam.ac.uk/biological-sciences

Find out more about the Naked Scientists at www.thenakedscientists.com
The relationship between social class and equality in education has been the subject of research since the 1950s, and there are three major ways in which educational inequality manifests itself: inequality of opportunity, of resources and of outcomes, by which we mean things like GCSE and A-level results.

Throughout those 70 years of study, the persistent message is that class does impact pupils’ school outcomes. When it comes to addressing the root causes of that disparity, however, work often centres on trying to identify discrete facets of class that might be the ‘solvable’ source of all attainment inequality. For example, by investigating whether working-class children have lower aspirations than their middle-class peers, or whether the school environment or curriculum is somehow inherently biased. I’d argue that we should think more holistically about students’ social backgrounds. The trigger for educational inequality isn’t solely access to material resources, parental involvement or what happens within the classroom itself, but the sum of all experience – a child’s aggregate lifestyle.

Social class – is education unequal?

With most schools still currently closed, media commentators suggest that our present social regulations are likely to be exacerbating inequality, and they are probably right. But trying to pin that down to single explanations, like not having access to technology, teacher support or a good diet, only tells part of the story. We need to take account of a child’s neighbourhood, their friendship circle, their engagement with parents, their hopes and dreams and everything else that forms the basis of their day-to-day experience.

Predicting grades, determining futures – the Class of 2020

What’s interesting right now from an academic perspective is to see how students from different backgrounds have fared in their recent A-level and GCSE exams. Over the last couple of years, we’ve seen the gap between the grades attained by disadvantaged pupils and their peers widen on some measures. This year, we were due to see students admitted to universities based on teacher-predicted grades standardised by Ofqual. However, preliminary analyses in the media indicated that the class gap in outcomes would probably grow using this system, because teacher-predicted grades were more likely to be down-graded for pupils in large state schools and FE colleges, rather than public schools.

In response to pupils’, parents’ and schools’ concern over standardisation exacerbating social inequality, the government have recently announced that examination results in England will be based on teacher-predicted grades alone. This does not mean that the potential for standardised grades reproducing inequality has
been fully eliminated. Some 55,000 students who were downgraded by Ofqual have already moved to their second choice of university and some of these will be disadvantaged students. Research also confirms that teacher-predicted grades are influenced, in part, by assumptions about students’ social background. The situation is, at the time of writing, fluid with frequent changes being made by the government reflecting the potential impact of predicted grades on the reproduction of inequality.

Spooling into the future, as an observer, it will be fascinating to watch the Class of 2020 during their degree courses and beyond. Will they perform any worse (or better) than students admitted after traditional public examinations? These are the lives of real people we’re talking about so without taking that lightly, it could produce some interesting social scientific evidence if we find that pupils admitted to universities on predicted grades do just as well as those who are made to sit exams.

At this present time, we don’t really know whether the exam outcomes achieved by different social classes are a good indicator of subsequent performance as, understandably, there’s been very little experimentation to see if institutions can take comprehensively educated students with lower grades and teach them a higher education syllabus to the same level of outcome. This is particularly true in highly selective universities like Cambridge.

How do we change the narrative?

Historically, society has tried to tackle educational inequality in several different ways. For example, there have been initiatives aimed at making the curriculum more relevant to working-class kids or at raising their aspirations, new systems of comprehensive schooling, university outreach programmes and policies like the Pupil Premium designed to increase the resources directed at disadvantaged students. These strategies have tended to focus on changing the values or behaviours of working-class children rather than creating a concerted, structural effort to transform the circumstances people find themselves in.

Later, continuing education has an important role to play for those who, for whatever reason, didn’t take the traditional education route. These programmes provide valuable, additional opportunities to access higher education and to learn new skills, allowing more people to flourish in their careers and enhance their own personal development when they might otherwise have perceived that chance to have gone.

But the fact that we’re still talking about educational inequality today suggests that making teachers in schools take sole responsibility for resolving the issue can only change so much. To significantly improve opportunities, resources and outcomes for disadvantaged students over the long-term, we probably need to make a deeper, more systemic shift and work together to help create a more equal society for all.

Learn more

To find out more about Education and Social Science programmes currently available at ICE visit: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/education-and-social-science
The short stories we recognise today flourished through the advent of mass-market magazines in the 19th century, for which they were a popular source of material. Writers like Edgar Allan Poe in the US and Robert Louis Stevenson in Britain quickly became popular exponents of the style as the publishing industry blossomed.

Any aspiring writer should consume as much of the genre they’re interested in as they can before setting pen to paper, and, for the short story, many of the classics originate in the 20th century: the works of Raymond Carver, for instance, or Katherine Mansfield, and of course Anton Chekhov, often cited as the one of the finest short-story writers we’ve known.

What makes short stories unique?

Short stories were originally designed to be read in a single sitting, which sounds obvious but also makes a deeper point about structure. The best short fiction should feel like a Polaroid snapshot or like a passing moment glimpsed from the corner of the eye. Ernest Hemingway developed a theory to explain this point, stating that, like an iceberg, nine-tenths of a story should be invisible to the reader.

Importantly, Hemingway made clear that the author should know the rest of the story, but that greater storytelling power comes from its conscious omission. In short stories, ends aren’t necessarily tied up and resolutions aren’t generally reached. For the reader, the deliciousness comes from filling in the gaps.

As we continue to adjust our daily routines, some of us are looking for ways to engage with new skills or rediscover old ones. Dr Lucy Durneen, ICE Creative Writing tutor and author of award-winning short fiction anthology, *Wild Gestures*, helps latent short story writers uncover their hidden talents.

... it’s important to develop your general writing muscles. Get into the habit of practising free-writing exercises...
How short is a short story? There’s no hard rule, but once you get over 10,000 words or so then you’re probably pushing the form towards novella status. At the other end of the scale, Hemingway famously penned many stories in a mere six words, including: “For sale: baby’s shoes, never worn.” So much said – and unsaid – in so few words.

Do your exercises, and watch the world

Once you’re ready to write, it’s important to develop your general writing muscles. Get into the habit of practising free-writing exercises by taking one trigger – an object on your desk, an emotion you’re feeling or anything else – and using it as the starting point for writing without pause for ten minutes, even if it’s nonsensical. Getting over the embarrassment of your awkward writing is part of the battle as you start unlocking your brain’s writing ‘muscle’.

Learn to be an observer of the world too. This is a great way of making things more interesting when you’re outside on your own under the current restrictions. Wander round with a notebook in your pocket and jot down whatever occurs to you. Who is that lady sat on the bench with her dog snuffling around her feet, for example? These might not be fully formed stories, but they might be starters for free-writing exercises, and who knows what nuggets they might ultimately reveal?

One of the first mistakes novice short story writers make is to try telling a complete story with too many strands. Instead, start by restricting yourself to a single idea. Another big hurdle to overcome is The Terrible First Draft. Don’t set out to craft your idealised story in one, solitary version. Questing for perfection from the outset will only lead to paralysis as you agonise over the blank page. Be prepared to write a sacrificial story and keep refining it, until you reach a final version you’re happy with – it may not even bear any resemblance to your starting point. Above all, have a go and enjoy the process.

Further reading?

If you’re interested in writing – or simply reading – short stories, as well as exploring the classics, there are superb printed and online resources to discover packed with exciting modern writers. *Granta* is probably the most famous literary magazine for new writing, but other interesting publications include *Ambit* and *The Lonely Crowd*. Online, *Jellyfish Review* has lots of free stories ready for you to dive straight into. Good luck!

Learn more

To find out more about the range of Creative Writing programmes available at ICE visit: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk/creative-writing](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/creative-writing)
Virtual Summer Festival of Learning: Real Communities of Learning

For nearly a century, the International Summer Programmes have brought people together, face-to-face in Cambridge, to hear our scholars talk about ideas and discoveries. This year, we had to find new ways to share inspirational learning with our global community of adult students.

Our first Virtual Summer Festival of Learning ran for three weeks in July. A tremendous amount of effort was put in by the International Summer Programmes team. Their efforts resulted in an impressive 89 VSFL courses and one Pre-University Programme. Tutors already scheduled to teach for Summer 2020 were joined by a number of other academics from across the University who volunteered to provide 78 free open-access talks on subjects such as Jane Austen, Neuroscience and the Presidency of John F Kennedy. The take-up for the Festival was impressive: around 1,150 individuals from 58 countries booked over 2,000 course places, and nearly 5,000 people in total registered their interest in either one or more of the courses or the open talks.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive – many echoed the messages encapsulated in the feedback from one American student: “I wanted you to know how much I appreciated the opportunity to join in this year. The two courses [I attended] were superb… And the open talks were uniformly excellent – twelve so far and another six or eight next week. I hope that you will be able to include those of us who cannot easily get to Cambridge in-person when you design your program for 2021 and beyond. It is a joy to be part of this.”

Learn more

Keep your eye on our website for news of future Festivals:
www.ice.cam.ac.uk/virtualfestival

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