

## 19 Goldsmiths undergraduate students welcomed by Tomsk State University for 2 months

**Erasmus+ grant for mobility between Goldsmiths and Tomsk State University (TSU) has enabled a large scale exchange between the two institutions. The initiative is led by Goldsmiths academics, in collaboration with the International Centre for Research in Human Development (ICRHD) at TSU. The first 19 Goldsmiths undergraduate students have been welcomed at the end of July by TSU, where they have started their 2-month internship.**

The visiting students will participate in a number of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural tracks, including cross-cultural psychology; early childhood development; creativity and giftedness. Apart from research activities, students will give sessions at local schools and share academic practice with students at TSU.

Students will also participate in activities of the Institute of Law and Ethics (ILE) and The Accessible Genetics Consortium (TAGC) - exploring Legal, Ethical and Societal Implications of Genetics (LESIG). For example, students will participate in the International Conference: Justice in the Genomic and Digital Era, organised by ICRHD & TAGC, with sessions by international experts in the areas of genetics, law and technology. The conference will also include student activities as well as a networking session, where Goldsmiths students can interact with TSU students from Russia and other countries.

‘This is the first time that we have organised such a large-scale mobility between the two institutions.’ – comments Yulia Kovas, Professor of Genetics and Psychology, director of InLab, Goldsmiths. ‘It is also the first time that the mobility is available not only for post-graduate students and staff, but also for undergraduate students. I am very happy that so many undergraduate students showed interest and high motivation to participate in this programme.’

‘Another exciting fact about this exchange is that it includes the new direction of collaboration between Goldsmiths and TSU – legal, ethical and societal implications of genetic findings’ explains Fatos Selita, Director of AIR Courses at Goldsmiths and ILE at TSU, and the Co-ordinator of LESIG working groups in Russia and the UK. ‘Addressing these implications is one of the most complex challenges for societies in developed economies. Such opportunities are invaluable for students’ development, and we thank the excellent team at the International Recruitment and Global Opportunities Team (IRGO), and particularly Eduardo Lees and Jack Selby who have provided continuous support with the application and throughout. We also thank Teemu Toivainen who has invested many hours of voluntary work for the last six months in preparing the students for the internship, including paperwork, enquiries and meeting with students to discuss practicalities.’

‘In addition to extensive academic content students have multiple opportunities for cultural learning’ – adds Olga Bogdanova, Associate Professor at Psychology Department; Director of the Centre for Programme Evaluation and Knowledge Dissemination in Child Development at Tomsk State University. ‘Students have an opportunity to get experience with different research

methods – for example, tutorials on R programming, EEG and eye-tracking, to develop competencies in academic research and communication, gain cross-cultural knowledge and experience in intercultural communication. Students engage in individual and group work, interactive project based activities to strengthen academic and soft skills. At the end of the programme students will present the outcomes of their research and internship work, deliver teaching sessions for university and school students on a variety of topics, discuss challenges, achievements and goals for future academic progress. This exchange is a result of joint team work at TSU and Goldsmiths and we hope to learn a lot from this experience to advance our collaboration’.

Teemu Toivainen and Robert Chapman, PhD students at Goldsmiths and active members of [InLab](#) and TAGC, have also visited TSU this month – conducting research and teaching, as part of the Erasmus programme. Teemu and Robert have been instrumental in coordinating the undergraduate mobility.

‘It is great to spend some time at Tomsk with such a great and active group of Goldsmiths’ students.’ – comments Teemu Toivainen. ‘Students have already been discussing their research interests and are excited to engage with on-going projects at TSU. Some students have gone the extra mile and started already planning their second year projects and third year dissertations, some potentially collecting data for cross-cultural analyses while visiting TSU. I am looking forward to continuing this work with the students upon their arrival back to Goldsmiths.’

‘The students have settled into Tomsk really well’ – comments Robert Chapman. ‘They have started engaging with some really interesting projects, including the development of plagiarism training material that will be used with Tomsk students. The ICRHD team has been kind enough to arrange molecular genetics and EEG workshops as the students were particularly interested in these. I’ve enjoyed teaching and discussing research ideas with the team at Tomsk and the students from Goldsmiths.’

The undergraduate students have also expressed some first impressions of TSU and Tomsk - a historical city, often referred to as Siberian Athens – home to several universities, including one of the best in Russia – Tomsk State University.

‘Tomsk is a nice city with so many lovely coffee shops’

‘Everything is so cheap, I’m living like a king’

‘Our hosts have been super helpful – thank you Olga!’

‘Plagiarism and school project are great - it’s nice to do something that will be actually used here’

‘It was great to have open discussions and debate on genetics and creativity – this was something different from normal Goldsmiths’ seminars

More info:

This is the second Erasmus+ grant obtained by Goldsmiths for mobility between the two institutions, building on the success of the first 2-year exchange. The 2016-18 Goldsmiths-TSU Erasmus+ mobility has provided many opportunities for students and staff from both institutions. This year, 6 MSc students from TSU spent 3 months at Goldsmiths and 18 more MSc and PhD students and staff from TSU will come to Goldsmiths this Autumn.