Alumna of the month

Introduction
Jessica Bain graduated from the UCL Department of Greek and Latin in 2005 with an honours degree in Arts (Ancient Civilisations). After taking an MA in Teaching from the University of Southern California, she is now a learning support teacher in international schools and currently lives in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

What did you enjoy most about your time in Greek and Latin and at UCL?
In the department, I had the opportunity to study the subjects that most interested me but, above all, I enjoyed the camaraderie of the other members of the department.

We were a small cohort and, with so few of us, it created a positive and tight environment where we could learn and participate in university life. The plays and activities that the department created and hosted helped form us into a cohesive group where I felt part of university life.

What was your career path like after leaving UCL?
After leaving UCL, I worked in corporate HR before switching into education. I started as a teaching assistant to see if this was the right path for me, before taking my teaching exams and licensing to teach Social Studies and Mild/Moderate Disabilities. After working in the public and private sector schools in the USA, I moved to an independent school in Kuwait, then to an International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary School in Hong Kong, and now teach in an IB school Mongolia where I mainly work with students with learning differences.

In education, I have taken the opportunity to teach Humanities and World Civilisations and to work with students at all age levels. I did my Masters in Teaching while I was based in Kuwait through an excellent program from the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education. The program afforded me the chance to teach, while studying, and to apply practical knowledge to my every day experiences. It was an intense program that focused on learners and learning and gave me the chance to speak with educators from across the globe through online fora and classes. The perspectives of so many other educators have been a tremendous guide to me as they helped me to complete the course as well as creating a network of teachers to communicate with and share ideas.
What do you like most about your current job?
Each day, I get to spend time with learners who are from a range of societies, as the students who attend the school come from varying backgrounds. Most are either Mongolian, whose parents have businesses in Mongolia, or are from families who have relocated to Mongolia with a company, most of which are involved in the mining industry, as the Gobi is rich in minerals. These students tend to stay for three years and come from Canada, Australia, or the USA. There is also a Korean population as ties between Mongolia and Korea are strong. This blend of cultures, languages, and ethnicities adds to the uniqueness of my job and the opportunity to learn about a variety of different peoples. It is very interesting and rewarding to teach global students and to develop the skill sets they will need as well as supporting them as they participate in a community that is very small and far removed from what would be their home culture.
A ger camp [pronounced gear (also called a yurt)] in the Terelj National Park; and dining room inside a ger!

What was your first-ever job?
Whilst at UCL, I worked in a marvellous store in London called VV Rouleaux that sells all manner of ribbons and trimmings. It was an excellent experience in the sales world: unique, and fun.

What has been your favourite job?
I worked for a couple of summers at SCUBA diving resorts in the Bahamas. The job of helping people learn to dive and being in boats and in the sea daily were some of the most enjoyable (albeit lazy) days of work. It could not be further removed from what I now do but there is symmetry to the elements of helping divers and working with young learners.

In what way did your studies help you in your subsequent work?
I began as a teacher of World Civilisations where my degree and training from UCL was helpful. Working with students who are preparing to enter university reminds me of my own practice and experience and this helps me to guide them to their next level of education.
Camping trip to the edge of the Gobi sand dunes for the school's annual Experiential Week, where students take a trip to learn through experience.

What do you remember most about your time in UCL Greek and Latin?
I remember how much I enjoyed our common room and hanging out there before class.

Who at UCL (past or present) has most influenced you?
I had the opportunity to have Bob Sharples as my tutor while at UCL and I was very grateful to him as a guide during my time there. He was a wealth of knowledge and eminently patient and kind.

Of what are you most proud about UCL?
I am always proud of UCL’s reputation as a top tier global university and I am most proud that UCL strives to be part of modern, global education and has moved well into the 21st century.

What is your favourite part of UCL?
I always enjoyed that UCL was very much part of London but that the streets immediately around the university retained a campus feel.

What, in your opinion, would improve UCL?
I hope that UCL will be able to update some of its facilities so that it remains an attractive university to a broad variety of students who will choose to matriculate there.

Tell me something about yourself that most people don’t know!
I am an open book – I can’t think of anything that wouldn’t already be known!
Horse dealer on the steppes

Selling mutton, a staple in Mongolian diet. The seller is wearing a del, the traditional dress, which is silk, lined with sheep fur and very warm!