

Uni student is a shining star

A University of Bedfordshire student has been honoured in the British Council's International Student Awards 2011.

Alin Dobrea from Romania is a final year Advertising and Marketing Communications student at the University and has been named a runner-up in the regional finals of the UK's biggest international student competition.

Alin was one of more than 1,200 students from 118 countries to enter the awards and he celebrated his extraordinary achievements at a national awards ceremony in London on 13 April.

The International Student Awards is a major initiative from the British Council that shines the spotlight on international students and their contributions to life in the UK.

To enter the competition, international students were encouraged to write a personal 'letter home' in English, detailing the out-of-class achievements that help make their time in the UK so rewarding.

Students studying at universities, colleges of further and higher education, schools and English language institutions across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales shared stories about the extra-curricular achievements that illustrate how they are making the most of their time in the UK.

A judging panel met last month to discuss the merits of short-listed entries

from the region. Alin's letter was judged to be one of the region's best and he will receive a £100 prize.

Alin has recently been awarded the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and the Steel Trust Scholarship. He was also part of the winning team at FLUX2010 – the UK's largest inter-university business competition drawing the most enterprising teams from the UK.

He said: "My time in the UK has been both challenging and fun. I've learnt that achieving top grades is not the only thing that matters as a student; what you do outside university is also important.



"For me extra-curricular activities have become as important as the course. There are plenty of opportunities for development and I have tried to grasp these with both hands. These opportunities here have helped me broaden my horizons, but most importantly they have shaped who I am today."

Vice Chancellor, Professor Les Ebdon CBE said: "We're thrilled that Alin has been recognised in this way. He is a fantastic example of someone who has made the most of their time at University."

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Martin Davidson Chief Executive of the British Council said the letters home written by the entrants were both poignant and inspiring. He added: "The students have immersed themselves in life in the UK and are making a huge contribution not just to their campuses but to the wider community. The British Council is delighted to recognise their considerable achievements."

Alin has also received the inaugural Vice Chancellor's Scholarship of up to £10,000 which is to be used to cover the cost of tuition fees.

Creation of scholarships is just the business

Eighteen scholarships have been created to cover the cost of students from The Business School at the University of Bedfordshire learning a foreign language.

The initiative from Paul Burns, Dean of The Business School, will also see students working alongside



local business people to absorb business culture and potentially develop useful contacts.

This is an extension of the Knowledge Hub-run foreign language classes for local business people who have dealings overseas, giving Business School students the opportunity to participate and to develop their employability potential after graduation.

Robert Hadland, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Marketing, has been heavily involved in this initiative.

One Business School student, Holly Brown, said: *“Ideally, being given the opportunity to learn a language would give me a greater chance of reaching my goals in the PR industry. I understand that learning a language would give me the skills to communicate with other organisations overseas or even allow me to work for foreign PR companies. I want to do whatever I can to break down any barriers that may be in my path of having a great future working in Public Relations.”*

This year, students are learning two major languages:

- Spanish – an increasingly important language in the USA, as well as South America.
- French – a principal language of the EU.

The business language courses are offered every year, starting in October, and include most widely spoken languages such as Mandarin Chinese or German as well as minor languages.

Rita Mascia, a business development manager from the Knowledge Hub, said: *“There is a misconception about language skills sought by employers.*

“It is not fluency in a foreign language that employers value as that can only be reached after a prolonged spell of time in the country where the language is spoken.

“Employers are looking for graduates with ‘conversational’ ability with the language, enough to exchange polite conversation with customers, suppliers and colleagues abroad and build rapport and business relationships.”

For further information on Language and Culture for Business courses, call 0800 328 5334 or email knowledge@beds.ac.uk.

Pictured left to right: Robert Hadland, Holly Brown and Rita Mascia



“Employers are looking for graduates with ‘conversational’ ability with the language...”

Students team up with local charity NOAH Enterprise

A team of budding entrepreneurs from the University of Bedfordshire is joining forces to offer advice to local homeless charity NOAH (New Opportunities and Horizons) Enterprise.

The five students from a variety of backgrounds are part of the University's branch of Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) and are working with advisors from the University's Careers and Employment Service and graduate M Sameer Ali Jinnah to address needs in the local community.



more people from different areas of expertise, we could make such a huge impact."

Irina added: *"It looks great on your CV too. The University of Bedfordshire Students' Union has been really supportive. Ciaran O'Brien has helped us with sponsorship and we all have SIFE t-shirts now."*

Mentor Paul Harrison from the Careers Service at the University said: *"SIFE creates an opportunity for a wide range of students supported by staff at the University and employers to showcase their abilities and help local people at the same time. We have a great team at the moment but want more students to come forward with ideas for projects in the local community."*

The team were invited to the Spirit of SIFE awards – a national award ceremony to honour recently formed SIFE groups. They were also honoured by the University recently, where they won Best Student Society and Outstanding Achievement Awards.

The team has a Facebook page where you can find out more. Search SIFE Bedfordshire at www.facebook.com

“The great thing about SIFE is that you can use your own skills to really make a difference.”

Irina Bucsa, a BA (Hons) Advertising and Marketing Communications student, started up the team after hearing a SIFE representative talk at the University. Other members include Merle Neiderhuefner, Ana Konova, Heidi Petijova and Tautvydas Tamulevicius – all studying various courses at the University.

SIFE is an international network that brings together a diverse group of university students, academic professionals and industry leaders around the shared mission of creating a better, more sustainable world through the positive power of business.

NOAH Enterprise was chosen as an ideal partner. It has a long history of collaboration with the University and the SIFE team felt they could start to address the very real need in their local community.

Irina said: *"It's a small team but we have big ideas. We're all totally committed to bringing about positive change, and NOAH Enterprise seemed a really useful place to start."*

The team undertook research to establish how NOAH Enterprise could best improve their business plan and

fundraising efforts. They did a shadowing programme and initial market research and have just presented their findings to the NOAH team.

Tautvydas, who is also studying Advertising and Marketing, said: *"SIFE's aim is to empower people by offering proof of possible change. We won't be actively fundraising for NOAH but believe our business suggestions will provide a sustainable way of increasing funding."*

Their approach is two-fold: firstly, to conduct the market research to better focus the retail side of the charity, and secondly to work to increase awareness in the community.

Next year the team is hoping for new members to keep up with their ideas. Tautvydas said: *"The great thing about SIFE is that you can use your own skills to really make a difference. If we have*

Enterprising Bedfordshire students scoop national title



Six budding entrepreneurs from the University of Bedfordshire won the National Flux Competition 2010.

Alexia Francesca Grech, Manjunath Basapoor, Greg Dorban, Alin Dobrea, Batjargal Sugarjav and Simona Stasiulyte represented the University in the challenging three-day inter-university Flux competition in Nottingham.

They were chosen as the winning team and awarded £500 each from a competitive process involving 32 universities from across the UK.

Flux crams a whole raft of enterprise and employability challenges into less than 36 hours. Organised by the Working Knowledge Group, it is the UK's largest annual competition promoting entrepreneurship and bridges the gap between education and the world of work.

One of the students, Greg studying on BA (Hons) Marketing course, said: "Winning was a fantastic feeling! To come top out of over 30 leading universities is just

unbelievable. Obviously we went there to win, but never expected it, especially after seeing and hearing our competitors."

Another, Batjargal, said: "We gained a lot of business experience and confidence by attending specialised workshops, Apprentice-style meetings and Dragons' Den-style sales pitches, and by presenting in front of around 300 people."

Three Flux champions from the University – Arti Kumar, Paul Harrison and Ina Maslejova, coached students to develop the necessary skills to win the competition.

Paul Harrison from the Centre for Personal and Career Development, said: "Students resolved a real business challenge. They had to defend their business proposal and plan under intense cross-questioning from the panel of judges with senior managers from Experian, Backup Direct, KPMG and other big brands."

Alin said: "Our idea revolved around the simple concept of training and providing NVQ certifications for disadvantaged people by involving them in the full production process of organic baby food."

Alexia, another BA (Hons) Marketing student, added: "Talking to the experts was undoubtedly the most intimidating part of the process. But it was a great privilege to have such successful people share their expertise and knowledge with us."

The annual competition was held for the fifth time – 30,000 students have been involved in total so far.

Jillian's book shows lessons learnt from the Credit Crunch



Jillian Farquhar at the launch of Marketing Financial Services in the Business School.

Jillian Farquhar, Professor of Marketing Strategy, celebrated a book launch in the Business School recently.

Jillian wrote the second edition significantly updated *Marketing Financial Services*, a specialist title written initially by Professor Arthur Meiden.

She said: "I have long been interested in financial services and in particular the marketing of these products and services.

"I've known of Arthur Meidan and admired his book for quite some time, so when the time came round to develop an updated edition I was eager to get involved.

"I called on the expertise of colleagues across Europe to write the case studies for the book, enabling this edition to have a stronger pan-European feel, broadening its appeal and application across national economies.

"Potentially, the book has a wide readership beyond marketing professionals. This edition was written during the onset of the Credit Crunch and is the first book to appraise what lessons the whole Financial Services sector can learn and do differently looking forward."

Also at the launch, John Beaumont-Kerridge, Head of Department for Marketing, said: "I'm delighted with Jillian's achievement. This book is pushing the barriers, an example demonstrating the Business School's commitment not only to teaching but to high quality research and collaborative working with academics and businesses across the world."

The book is published by Palgrave Macmillan. Further information, including details on how to order a copy, can be found on Palgrave Macmillan's website.



Members of the Business School's Marketing team join Jillian Farquhar (pictured in the yellow dress) at the launch ceremony for her book, *Marketing Financial Services*.