



JAMES LISHMAN, 25

I came to the IMESS program with a relatively limited academic knowledge of the CEE region, but with a strong desire to learn more and to experience the region directly through the year abroad element. The first year in London at SSEES offered an excellent grounding in some of the main historical and political themes from the CEE region, and particularly South-East Europe and the former Yugoslavia. The choice of modules was broad enough that I was able to pursue my interests in the former Yugoslavia, whilst maintaining the freedom to broaden my horizons. The language classes in Serbian/Croatian were excellent, and proved to be a good introduction to the language that I was able to build on once I got to Belgrade.

The year abroad was the main selling point for IMESS from my perspective, and I wasn't disappointed. I wasn't sure what to expect from my time at the University of Belgrade, given that we were the first IMESS cohort to go there, but we were made to feel welcome very quickly, and the staff responsible for us went above and beyond to help us, both in terms of our academic needs and in terms of meeting people and getting to know the city. The dissertation supervision was comprehensive and very helpful, and my supervisor played a key role in helping to guide my research and to create a structure that would allow me to tackle such a long piece of work. I can't recommend Belgrade highly enough as a city to spend your IMESS year abroad – the lifestyle and atmosphere in the city is fantastic, and the opportunities for travel are ideal for those with an interest in the Balkans. The department organized a visit to southern Serbia and Kosovo, and put us in touch with people working in the EU mission and elsewhere that gave us a unique insight into the region.

Currently I am working as an intern at an NGO in Sarajevo, and I feel the knowledge of the region that I have gained from my time in Belgrade has been invaluable in that role. From May I'll be working for the OSCE in Copenhagen, and I am sure that having completed a prestigious programme like IMESS has been an important factor in securing that role, given that it provides a mixture of new language skills, and thorough grounding in the CEE region, and the unique insight that comes from spending a substantial amount of time in one country/region.



JEMMA HOARE, 24

Here is a testimonial- I followed the rough structure of the ones in the link, but if you want me to focus more on Belgrade, let me know! If it needs to be longer/shorter/ if any bits need clarification I'm happy to edit it: When choosing a Masters programme I knew I wanted to spend some time studying abroad, and IMESS really stood out because it offered two degrees at the Masters level and a structured and rigorous academic programme. The first year at UCL gave lots of methodological courses, along with some area-specific modules and really great language classes which stood me in good stead for my second year in Belgrade. I was part of the first cohort that had gone to Belgrade as part of the IMESS course, so I was a little bit apprehensive, but it turned out that I had nothing to worry about. What really made my experience at the University of Belgrade so great was all the members of staff who helped us. They were always there to answer any questions, to help us navigate the bureaucracy, and were really invested in both our academic and wider experience in Serbia. I had really excellent supervision from my dissertation supervisor, and was able to access all the primary sources I needed to write a thesis that I was really proud of. The language classes were arranged for us with an excellent teacher, only us three IMESS students, and on a less frequent but more intensive basis so that we had enough time to devote to the rest of our studies.

The academic year in Belgrade was tailored great for us as we could afford a lot more time in the second term to our dissertation' and maybe also to add 'and we had the whole summer to write it up.

Belgrade was a great city to study and live in, it felt like home really quickly. There were lots of cultural offerings: I went to about 7 film festivals during my 9 months in the city! The people in Belgrade were really welcoming and there were always new things to explore. We even managed to travel quite extensively in the region, which was a real bonus. I would really recommend Belgrade as a destination for the second year on the IMESS program. Here is some stuff about what I'm doing now. Not sure if it's just for your interest of for publication somewhere but if it's the latter again if it needs editing or whatever I'm happy to do so! In October I started on the National Graduate Development Programme- a 2 year graduate scheme in UK local government. I work for the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and my first of four placements that each last 6 months is as an Analysis and Development Officer for an employment program targeted at people affected by Welfare Reform, and an apprenticeship targeted at disadvantaged young residents in the Borough. I'm taking evening language classes back at SSEES and once I've finished this graduate program I hope to look at transferring the skills and experiences I've gained and return to live and work in the region.



KATE WEBSTER, 31

Having lived and worked in the CCE (Central-Eastern Europe) region for several years following my undergraduate degree, I was looking for a Master's program to tie in with my personal interest in the region. The language tuition element and opportunity to spend a year abroad were the main reasons I chose IMESS. Having done some research and read what former students had to say, I had high expectations for the course, and I certainly wasn't disappointed. The year in London gave me a thorough grounding in the diverse historical, political and linguistic backgrounds of the areas covered by SSEES. There's a wide range of optional courses and a decent array of methodological classes to choose from, depending on the focus of your dissertation. I spent the 2nd year in Belgrade - along with 2 others, we were the 1st IMESS cohort to arrive in Belgrade, and the staff did everything possible to make sure we had a fulfilling experience, both academically and culturally speaking. It was here that I was able to put the knowledge gained from year 1 into context, learning about the recent history and politics of the Balkans in more depth. I received support and encouragement to follow a topic of personal interest and carry out original research for my dissertation, which involved hard work but was also a lot of fun. I got an internship and research opportunity in the Musical institution of the Serbian Academy for Science and Art, that was the best institution for my topic of my thesis.

We also had opportunity to attend other classes, I used that as a perfect chance to study Albanian language.

I'm now working as a freelance translator, using some of the skills I acquired through IMESS, so I'm particularly grateful for the excellent language tuition we received, both at UCL and in Belgrade. IMESS offers a really flexible, vigorous and inspiring two-year study program that I'd recommend to anyone who would like to build on their passion for the CEE region, emerging with a useful degree that can open a number of doors, and enjoying some unforgettable experiences along the way