

NEWSLETTER

*"Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought."
Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Biochemist*

Week 22 2023-24

CIFE MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE 2024



CIFE MODEL UNITED NATIONS



CATS Cambridge welcomed delegates from schools in the region to take part in the CIFE Model United Nations Conference 2024. This is a prestigious event and we were pleased to host the committees as they wrestled with big and important global problems.

The conference held four committees (see below), with country delegates proposing solutions on climate change, reducing global warming, illicit drug use crackdowns, use of AI, and global communications in developing countries.

- United Nations Economic and Social Council
- United Nations Human Rights Council
- United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
- United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) 29 on Climate change

Model UN is a great opportunity for students to experience global politics and grasp the mechanisms of debate. It offers students a dynamic platform to cultivate vital skills such as diplomacy, critical thinking, public speaking, and negotiation. It fosters a deep understanding of global issues, encourages collaboration, and nurtures empathy by simulating real-world diplomacy. This experiential learning is invaluable for future leaders navigating complex global challenges.



RESEARCH COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

We were pleased to host the annual CATS Cambridge Research Community Conference this week. Speakers and delegates from The Worthgate School, The Guildhouse, The Perse and CATS Cambridge came together to discuss active research taking place in the schools.

Educational research is vital because it helps us to better understand how students learn, enables the improvement of teaching methods, and ensures that educational practices are evidence-based and effective in fostering academic growth and development. Through collaborative platforms like the CATS Cambridge Research Community Conference, educators and researchers come together to exchange ideas, share best practices, and contribute to a collective effort aimed at enhancing the quality of education. This collaborative spirit fosters a dynamic environment where innovative solutions to educational challenges can emerge, ultimately benefiting students and educators alike.

The event began with an introduction from Dominic Tomalin, Principal, followed by a keynote speech from Dr Sue Brindley, PPE Co-ordinator for University of Cambridge and Chief Academic Officer for CGS, where she considered the nature of education as the “guided profession” and the importance of educational research in bringing us all together as a community.

All the presentations were in-depth, engaging and examined a variety of areas in educational research, including placement tests, sustainability, and student autonomy. You can find out more about each talk on the next page, including CATS Cambridge student Gabriel's exceptional research on “Sleep and learning - does a good night's sleep promote better learning?”



RESEARCH COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

Evaluating the ESL Placement Test Rob Derbyshire | Head of ESL – CATS Cambridge

Rob explored how the ESL placement test is implemented at CATS Cambridge, considering the pros and cons, current practice, and areas for development.



Sleep and learning - does a good night's sleep promote better learning? Gabriel | Student - CATS Cambridge

Gabriel discussed the importance of sleep for students when studying, reflecting on the effects of sleep deprivation and the link between achievement and sleep.



Epistemic Insight: Using knowledge about knowledge to embrace life's Big Questions Murray Wilkinson | Epistemic Champion; Physics Teacher - The Worthgate School

Murray considered how subject specialists approached big ideas and shed light on how different those approaches (and answers!) can be!



Student-Centred Approach Neelam Debata | Head of Science - CATS Cambridge

Neelam reflected on the importance of exam strategies for students, not just subject knowledge, and how she has adjusted her own practice in the classroom based on student feedback.



RESEARCH COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

How can a teacher be supported when they are experiencing changes to their work environment?
Steve Scott | Senior Lab Technician
– CATS Cambridge

Steve showcased the end result of many hours of labour as he recorded experiment after experiment to support teachers during the pandemic. The library of experiments continues to grow and helps science teachers explore reactions in much more detail than a demo can allow as well as provide opportunities for students to explore experiments in their own time.



Embedding sustainability thinking into the curriculum
Simon Wilson-Hughes | Business & Economics Teacher; Fast Fashion Elective - The Worthgate School

Simon took us on a lesson in sustainable thinking, talking us through how his fashion students are taking a positive step in recycling old clothes to make brand new items.



Handing over control: giving students autonomy through Model United Nations and Student Council
Mark Hopkinson | House Pastoral Director; MUN Coordinator; Global Politics & International Relations Teacher - The Worthgate School

Mark discussed the importance of removing the reins and allowing students to explore ideas through autonomy through the lens of Model UN.



BUSINESS INCUBATOR CHALLENGE

On Monday, March 4th, our school proudly participated in the finals for the Business Incubator Challenge at Guildhouse London.

Our team, Trackball, consisting of Anna, Ibrahim, Bulut, and Tulio, emerged victorious, clinching the overall competition title. The judges were notably impressed by the exceptional quality of their presentation and the thoroughness of their financial analysis.

It is essential to extend congratulations not only to our winning team but also to our other participating teams in the internal competition who have been diligently refining their business ideas since October 2023. Their dedication and hard work have not gone unnoticed, and the judges argued that each team had the potential to win.

Congratulations to both Ecoflora and Abletable on developing interesting business ideas and showing promising signs of budding entrepreneurship.





The day the UN came to town

Dominic Tomalin,
Principal



It was a real pleasure to host and offer some introductory remarks to the delegates of this year's CIFE Model United Nations. This was my first Model UN, and the first one hosted by CATS Cambridge. The preparations for the event forced me to find out about the mechanics of how the UN works and the protocols that are followed by delegates from its member countries. On first reading, it all seems convoluted and bureaucratic, almost designed for indecision and inaction, yet they work. To its great credit the UN has kept the world talking even under the tensest of circumstances. It has been there to keep the peace, or to seek out peace where peace has been lost.

The protocols and the bureaucracy, for all their frustrations, are artfully configured to keep us talking to avoid the perils of diplomacy and politics faltering into conflict and war. It has not always been successful, though during the last 80 years it has played an important role in mitigating against the escalation of conflicts into global conflagration. In doing so it has enabled collaborations and developments that have improved the lives of millions.

Keeping conflicts at bay enables the UN to bring nations together to discuss how to meet the challenges of our time, climate change and pandemic for example, whilst also dealing with more mundane agreements; for example, my own cursory research led to the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. I have no doubt that there are literally thousands of similar arrangements discussed and agreed within the UN's committees, each helping to make the world a better place.

In 2024 the UN faces extraordinary challenges. I chose to remind the CIFE Model UN delegates of Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie's forlorn entreaties to the League of Nations in 1936. He made them in the wake of Italy's invasion of his dominions. His appeal was rejected by League of Nations (23 votes against, 1 in favour and 25 abstentions). An outcome that saw the world take a step towards the global conflict that became World War II, and with that step also toward the demise of the League of Nations itself.

The League of Nations had been formed to keep the peace after the Great War of 1914-18. That it failed is manifest in the renaming of the Great War, as World War I. Its impotence in the face of new imperial ambitions saw its credibility crumble. Something that we all need to be mindful in midst of today's conflicts. Ultimately the UN is only as effective as the aggregate mandate it is afforded by its member states.

As national agendas are brought together, there is always the risk of political and diplomatic ambitions being directed by a level of self-interest that obfuscates the common good. The common good can be very difficult to discern when you are responsible for representing and protecting your own in the here and now. It is a difficult trick to pull off.

Yet, at the CIFE UN, at least, the delegates managed to navigate their paths over difficult territories to meaningful resolutions. I took great heart from the efforts, skills, and attitudes that 40 delegates from 8 schools brought to bear in their committee chambers. They were assertive yet empathetic in their engagements – they listened first, they checked their understanding, they articulated their own positions with great clarity, and they worked positively to find common ground. The UN would do well to look them up on the other side of their undergraduate studies.