

# The Westford Communiqué

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## Westford Award 2024 - Celebrating Excellence in Business and Beyond



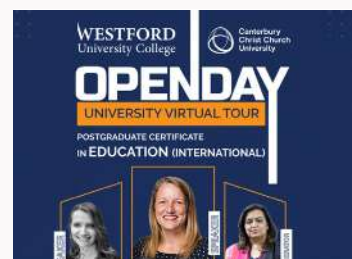
05 WESTFORD DBA  
RESEARCH BOOTCAMP



07 MBA ALUMNI MEET



11 VIRTUAL OPEN DAY



# "WESTFORD AWARDS 2ND EDITION" HONORING EXCELLENCE ACROSS BUSINESS AND BEYOND



On April 21, the illustrious Mina Al Salam, Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, became the epicentre of recognition and celebration as the Westford Awards Ceremony, 2nd Edition unfolded in grandeur. Honoring outstanding achievements across diverse sectors, the event was a testimony to the spirit of excellence and innovation driving businesses and leaders forward.

Hosted by Maz Hakim, Virgin Radio RJ, the ceremony was inaugurated by the welcoming words of Mr. Hanil Haridas, Co-founder and CEO of Westford University College, and was followed by the distribution of Awards in 5 distinct categories as below:

In the domain of Business Excellence, leaders emerged triumphant across various sectors, from fintech to aviation. The winners include industry titans such as Al Ansari Exchange, Alshaya Group, Aramex, AstraTech, Expo City, Ezra Couture, flydubai, Hapag-Lloyd, Huda Beauty, Insurancemarket.ae, Khansahab, Kitopi, LA Perle by Dragone, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Me Dubai by Melia, Medcare, Motivate Media Group, National Transportation Solutions Company, Prime Group, Radisson Hotels, Rakbank, Royal Jet, Zurich Middle East, and Zulekha Hospitals.

In the Business Impact category, which honors companies that have transformed communities and industries, the winners left a lasting impression in the realms of social responsibility, innovation, and sustainability. BEEAH Group, CAFU, Choithrams, Delhi Private School, Dubai Airport Freezone Authority, Gems Legacy School, MASDAR, Meritto, Saudi Amad for Airport Services and Transport Support, Thaely, the Kanoo Group stood and Zeeloo by Smartblock Beverages FZ LLC stood tall as champions of change.

In the sphere of Social Impact, champions emerged, embodying compassion, advocacy, and cultural enrichment. The British Council's commitment to English language education, Friends of Cancer Patients' advocacy for health and lifestyle, and IACAD, Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre for Islamic Cultures of cultural heritage stood as testaments to the power of social consciousness. The humanitarian efforts of the Emirates Red Crescent resonated deeply, reflecting a commitment to global welfare.

The category of Service Excellence shone brightly, with individuals making a profound impact through their dedication and commitment. Individuals who went above and beyond, embodying the essence of service and dedication are:

#### **Alok Kumar**

CO- founder and CEO of Zywa

#### **Jennifer Sault**

Founder and Managing Director of Thrift for Good

#### **Josie Conlu**

Co-Lead, Tatak Pinoy

#### **Leisa Grace Wilson**

Editorial Director Teach Middle East Magazine

#### **Mania El Baba**

Founder and CEO - Spec Brite Group

#### **Nayla Al Khaja**

Executive Producer/ Director, Nayla Al Khaja Films

#### **Sujith Koshy Varghese**

TEDx speaker, Personal trainer, and Emerging Rapper

#### **Syed Moosa Raza**

Global Partnership Advisor – Private Office of HH. Sheikh Ahmed Bin Faisal Al Qassimi



In the Leadership Impact category, visionary leaders rose to prominence, guiding both industries and communities towards a promising future. The remarkable contributions of these leaders have illuminated the path forward, inspiring progress and innovation in the business landscape.

**Abdallah Abu-Sheikh,**  
Founder of Astra Tech, CEO of Botim

**Ahlam Bolooki**  
CEO, the Emirates Literatur Foundation

**Asha Alexander**  
Principal, Gems Legacy School

**Ezzeddine Jradi**  
Chief Transformation Officer, Emicool LLC

**Naveen Goyal**  
Founder and CEO, Meritto

**Ishwar Chugani**  
CEO and Managing Director,  
Giordano Middle East

**Marwan Jassim Al Sarkal**  
Founder, Chapter 3 LLC

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Founder, Chapter 3 LLC

**Khadija Al Bastaki**  
Senior Vice President of Dubai  
Design District (d3), part of  
TECOM Group, PJSC

**Mishal Kanoo**  
Chairman, The Kanoo Group

**Saeed Al Mansouri**  
Mohammed Bin Rashid Space  
Centre

**Zeina Khoury**  
CEO, Zed Capital Real Estate

**Roberto Croci**  
Director, Public Investment  
Fund (PIF)

Additionally, the event unveiled the Best Brand Awards, reflecting the survey responses of over a thousand students from Westford University College. The recognized brands, including Almarai, Centrepoin, Etisalat, Lulu Group, ADNOC, Noon, Emirates, Talabat, Mai Dubai and Majid Al Futtam, were celebrated for their resonance and impact among the student community.

The ceremony culminated with the awarding of trophies and certificates of appreciation to all recipients, symbolising their outstanding efforts and achievements. The event was attended by Westford Education Group partners as well as distinguished academic dignitaries from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Universidad Católica de Murcia (UCAM), Canterbury Christ Church University, University of Gloucestershire, Abertay University, Liverpool John Moores University, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority, emphasising the importance of academic-industry collaboration in fostering excellence.

During the vote of thanks, Mr. Zawahir Siddique, Dean of Westford University, inspired the audience to adopt a mindset of "Why Not," encouraging them to embrace challenges and pursue opportunities with courage and determination.

The Westford Awards, an initiative by Westford University College, stands as a beacon of equity guided by an internal jury of industry experts, academicians, and student feedback. As it continues to recognize excellence and inspire future leaders, the ceremony serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of innovation and impact driving the global business landscape.



# WESTFORD DBA RESEARCH BOOTCAMP 2024 EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SHAPING GLOBAL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP



Another successful DBA Research & Leadership Boot Camp is in the books, unleashing students into the world of professional research. The recent bootcamp held on 23rd April 2024 was designed to help our DBA candidates overcome writing obstacles with tips and strategies to complete their thesis. With 80+ promising DBA scholars converging from across the globe this prestigious one-day event at Radisson Blu Hotel, Business Bay, Dubai showcased a blend of scholarly pursuits, paper presentations, and immersive leadership workshops, aimed at cultivating the next wave of influential business leaders and researchers.





The Westford DBA Bootcamp commenced with a resonating symphony of insights, as luminaries from both UCAM and Westford University College took the stage. Dr. Gonzalo Wandosell, Dean of the Faculty of Business Sciences and Director of the UCAM Doctoral Program in the Social Sciences acquainted the attendees with UCAM's legacy and unwavering commitment to academic brilliance. Dr. Andrew Hambler, Dr. Renaldo De Jager, and Dr. Soofi Anwar representing Westford University College, extended a warm embrace to the participants, setting the stage for a day brimming with learning and good fellowship. Prof. Col (Retd.) Anil Ahluwalia kindled the intellectual fervor with his encouraging words, emphasizing the pivotal role of research in propelling innovation and progress.

Pivotal to the DBA voyage, the bootcamp dedicated insightful attention to research. Dr. Andrew Hambler's discourse on "Preparing for your viva" and "Writing a Literature Review" imparted essential tools for exceptional research presentations. Dr. Hambler gave valuable guidance on selecting thesis topics, empowering students to navigate academic research confidently including insights on utilizing AI tools in research, equipping students with innovative methodologies.

Additionally, the Boot Camp provided a platform for knowledge sharing and mentorship. Distinguished members from the DBA Alumni community shared their research journey with inspiring students with their dedication and perseverance. Their insights motivated students to pursue their own research endeavors with renewed determination.



# WESTFORDIAN EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF TOGETHERNESS AT THE MBA ALUMNI MEET



The MBA Alumni Iftar Meet was hosted on 2nd April 2024 paving an avenue to meet and network with the alma matter and Westford stakeholders.

The Alumni fraternity who attended the Iftar meet graduated from an array of university partners: University of Wolverhampton, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Abertay University, Canterbury Christ Church University, University of Gloucestershire, Girne American University and UCAM.

There was immense enthusiasm and interest shown by the Alumni with over 200 registrations and over 100 who turned up for the event.



MBA ALUMNI MEET

The esteemed alumni members were greeted and updated of the recent developments and various opportunities and contributions that they could make were explored. Some of the avenues discussed were Toastmasters Club membership exclusively for the Alumni, a reserved slot for the Alumni at Westford TEDx event, representing and participating in the Alumni Boot Camp, representing the panels and jury in various Intra Westford events and interacting with students in the industry-academia interface.

The Westford University College stakeholders from the CEO, Mr. Hanil Das to the members of faculties, consultants, counsellors, and academic support staff interacted with the Alumni and revived nostalgic memories and shared success stories with each other. The Alumni members also shared their experiences and success stories and made the event even more resourceful.

The evening ended with Iftar and a promise to come back for more meetings and gatherings in the future.





# WESTFORD DBA AND MBA STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN TOASTMASTERS MEETING



The Westford Toastmasters Leaders Club is back with yet another ravishing meeting! This meeting conducted on Saturday, 27th April by TMOD David Isaac was truly one to not miss, also known as the Area Director of Area 19 in the toastmaster's fraternity, TM David surely helped us face our most gruesome fears in the meeting! From falling teeth nightmares to stage fright, facing our fears is something we all need to do on a daily.

It was a unique meeting that welcomed guests and members from a variety of professions, and it was great to have an opportunity to network with them!

The meeting started with a very energetic welcome by the SAA Saakshi, and then went to the TMOD introducing the theme of the day "Face the Fear". A quite engaging theme if I may say, as someone who fears change, the topic surely gave me a different perspective about facing my fears and embracing them.



**Rosalyn Flory**

BSc (Hons) Business  
with Finance – LJMU, UK

As for our Ice Breaker speech given by TM Kavisha, it was refreshing to hear about the life of a fellow toastmaster! As we moved on with the meeting, we had some amazing table topics prepared by our Table Topics master, TM Hitesh who took the stage with great poise and enthusiasm.

All in all, it was great to be able to be a part of this unique meeting, networking with fellow toastmasters from the Doctorate and Master's Program, and learning about the fears people face on a day-to-day basis. Come join us at our next meeting, for you are sure to be swept away!



# DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES: HOW TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT ARE RESHAPING MARKETING & INNOVATION



Mr. Hariz Mumtaz, the Marketing & Growth Lead - Digital Platforms at Ghassan Aboud Group, shared his expertise with the Business students at Westford University College. His session covered five key subtopics, providing valuable insights into the evolving field of marketing and innovation:

#### **Impact of AI on Marketing Strategies:**

Mr. Mumtaz discussed how AI is transforming customer engagement and personalization, emphasizing its growing role in developing effective marketing strategies.

#### **Blockchain for Transparency and Trust:**

He highlighted the role of blockchain technology in enhancing transparency and trust within marketing practices, demonstrating how it can be leveraged to build more reliable and secure marketing frameworks.

**The Rise of Virtual and Augmented Reality:** Mr. Mumtaz examined the influence of VR and AR technologies on creating immersive brand experiences, showcasing their potential to revolutionize customer interactions and brand storytelling.

#### **Big Data Analytics in Decision Making:**

He explained the importance of utilizing big data analytics to inform strategic decisions and predict consumer behaviour, illustrating how data-driven insights can drive more effective marketing campaigns.

#### **Sustainable Innovation in Product Development:**

Emphasizing the importance of sustainability, Mr. Mumtaz discussed ethical considerations in product innovation and marketing, highlighting the need for sustainable practices to ensure long-term business viability.

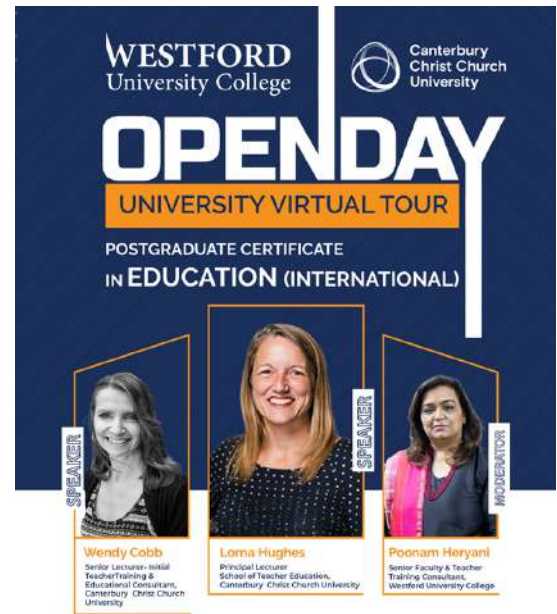
Through this comprehensive lecture, students gained a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of the business industry and the critical role of innovation in sustaining organizational success.

# PGCEI VIRTUAL OPEN DAY

## A GATEWAY TO TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING

Westford University College, UAE in collaboration with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), UK, welcomed prospective students to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education International (PGCEi) Virtual Open Day, aimed at introducing the transformative (PGCEi) programme from CCCU, UK. The event was a comprehensive session designed to provide insights into the course's innovative curriculum and its potential impact on teaching careers.

Dr. Lorna Hughes and Wendy Cobb, esteemed lecturers from CCCU, spearheaded the session, offering valuable perspectives on the unique aspects of the PGCEi program. Dr. Hughes, a Principal Lecturer and School Lead for Internationalization, shared her expertise in special educational needs and inclusion. Wendy Cobb, a Senior Lecturer with extensive experience in international teaching exchanges, emphasized the programme's global perspective.



### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSION:

#### INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES:

Dr. Hughes and Ms. Cobb discussed the cutting-edge approaches embedded in the PGCEi curriculum. These methodologies are designed to foster critical thinking, creativity, and the practical application of knowledge, ensuring educators are equipped to meet contemporary classroom challenges.

#### GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE:

The speakers highlighted the programme's international dimension, preparing students to navigate diverse educational contexts. This global mindset is crucial in today's increasingly interconnected world, making the PGCEi a valuable asset for educators aiming to work in varied cultural settings.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Emphasizing the career-enhancing opportunities within the curriculum, the session underlined how the PGCEi supports skill development. Graduates are well-prepared to meet the demands of the education sector, armed with advanced knowledge and practical skills.

The Virtual Open Day was an interactive platform, allowing attendees to engage actively by posting questions in the chat box. This interaction enriched the experience, providing prospective students with a deeper understanding of the programme's benefits.

The session concluded with a heartfelt thank you from the Westford team to Dr. Hughes and Ms. Cobb for their invaluable insights. Prospective students were encouraged to consider how the PGCEi could align with their personal and professional aspirations, offering a pathway to deepen their understanding of teaching methodologies, explore inclusive education practices, and expand their global network.

Westford looks forward to welcoming a new cohort of PGCEi students, ready to embark on a journey towards successful and fulfilling teaching careers. The Virtual Open Day proved to be an inspiring and informative event, setting the stage for transformative educational experiences.

# A MEMORABLE JOINT MEETING WITH THE MUHAISNAH GAVEL'S CLUB



I was set to be the Toastmaster of the Day (TMOD) for an exciting meeting, not just because of my role, but because we had special guests joining us: The Muhaisnah Gavel's Club.

At first, I felt a bit nervous about how the members would respond to me as the TMOD and how well I would deliver my presentation. However, my apprehensions quickly faded away when I met the incredibly friendly and welcoming members, especially Mrs. Nayana, the coordinator for The Muhaisnah Gavel's Club.

What truly amazed me were the speakers from the visiting club. Many were younger than I expected, yet their speeches were delivered with a level of maturity and insight that was truly impressive. As the TMOD, my goal was to ensure everyone felt comfortable and connected with the topic of the day: Influence. I was delighted to see how well everyone engaged with the topic, sharing personal stories that brought it to life.

The meeting was smoothly conducted by our President, Ahal Karim, with the support of our mentors, Ms. Roslyn and Mr. David. The positive energy and enthusiasm from both The Muhaisnah Gavel's Club and The Westford Gavel's Club members were infectious, giving me the confidence to present just as I had hoped.



**Nathaniel Azavedo**  
The Elite English School

The experience was incredibly rewarding, and I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss a topic that has had a positive impact on my life. I look forward to many more collaborative meetings with The Muhaisnah Gavel's Club in the future.



# MY CULINARY CREATIONS BRING JOY TO EVERYONE WHO INDULGES IN THEM!

Every single one of us enjoys pursuing a unique set of interests and hobbies. Sometimes, without even realising it, we find ourselves pulled to particular pursuits that fill us with immense happiness. Engaging in these activities not only helps us to escape the stress of our everyday lives but also gives us peace and joy.

For me, this is exactly how my hobbies evolved into true love. It all started when I was just 12 years old, spending countless hours in the kitchen with my beloved grandma. It was during these beautiful moments that I realised my strong desire to cook, and so my passion came to be. My interest became greater with time, and at the age of 15, I enrolled in several cooking classes. It was during these classes that I discovered how much I enjoyed making meals for people and tasting new cuisines, which solidified my passion for culinary arts.



**Shenaaz Fervin Ravooof**  
BSc (Hons) in Business Management – CCCU



My journey as a foodie has not only allowed me to explore various cuisines and recreate dishes, but it has also sparked a deep passion for cooking within me. With every dish I create, I strive to bring joy and satisfaction to those who indulge in my culinary creations. As I continue along this path, I am ecstatic to see where my passion for food and cooking will lead me, and I am motivated to leave my imprint on the culinary world. I am a passionate food aficionado who is always looking for new and fascinating cuisines to try. This enthusiasm for food has led me to not only enjoy the flavours and textures of diverse meals but to learn more about the art of cooking.

As I began learning about different cuisines, I became interested in the techniques and ingredients required to prepare these exquisite dishes. This fascination drove me to start on a culinary adventure in which I not only learned how to make these meals but also placed my own distinctive touch on them. Dreaming big, my ultimate goal is to become an executive chef, using my abilities and creativity to create unforgettable dining experiences. The idea of competing in a prominent competition like MasterChef simply boosts my

desire. The opportunity to demonstrate my culinary abilities on such a huge scale would be a dream come true. I am motivated to follow my interest completely, continually polishing my talents and growing my knowledge in the culinary world.

As I look back upon my culinary path, I am grateful for the events that developed my love of cooking. From precious experiences in the kitchen with my grandmother to discovering new cuisines and honing my talents, each step has fueled my passion for the culinary arts. Looking ahead, I am excited to continue developing my art, pushing the boundaries, and sharing my culinary creations with people. With ambition and a desire to learn, I am eager to see where this wonderful journey leads me, seizing every chance to inject soul into each dish I prepare.



# MY DBA DEGREE IS A GATEWAY TO FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE REALM OF RESEARCH & LEADERSHIP

Being awarded a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) with a specialization in Leadership and Management marks a monumental milestone in my educational and professional journey, epitomizing both personal fulfilment and the opening of new horizons in research and leadership opportunities.

This pinnacle achievement is not merely an academic accolade; it is a testament to the enduring power of perseverance, self-motivation, and resilience required to overcome the myriad challenges that mark the path of a dedicated researcher. The magnanimity of wearing the Doctoral Tam at the felicitation ceremony comes as the reward for showcasing meticulous analytical acumen, profound resilience, exceptional time management, and rigorous scholarly integrity.

My academic odyssey was enriched by the completion of four master's degrees before this ultimate pursuit, each step building upon the last, weaving a rich tapestry of knowledge and experience. These degrees were not just milestones, but also stepping stones, paving the way to this defining moment of my career. They instilled in me a rigorous discipline and an insatiable curiosity about the nuances of leadership and management, propelling me towards the pursuit of a doctorate.

A clear vision and efficient time management have been my compass and clock in this journey. Research, especially in fields as dynamic and impactful as leadership and management, demands a visionary outlook to anticipate and address the evolving challenges and opportunities. Balancing the rigorous demands of research with personal responsibilities requires meticulous time management, a skill that I have honed over years of juggling academic, professional, and personal commitments.



Dr. Sazina Khan  
Doctorate of Business Administration - UCAM

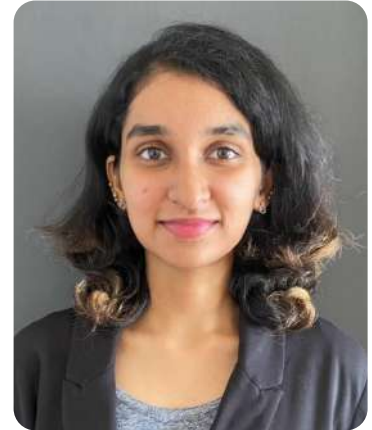
The trajectory towards obtaining my doctorate was profoundly influenced by the mentorship and assistance of an exceptional cadre of faculty members. My supervisor offered invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout my research. The program director provided me with strategic counsel that assisted me in navigating the intricate research environment. Furthermore, in their capacities as course coordinators were instrumental in fostering a conducive academic atmosphere that was vital to the success of my research pursuits.

In reflection, this doctorate is not merely a culmination but a gateway to further contributions in the realms of research and practical leadership, promising a future rich with potential and purpose.

# STYLE THAT SUITS — DRESS TO IMPRESS

Understanding the science and psychology behind clothing and styling choices are far from the daily concerns of most people, but everyone is affected by it, consciously and or subconsciously.

Regardless of one's beliefs, the way one dresses significantly impacts the quality of their life. Though it may seem unfair, the halo effect, or first impression bias, is undeniable. In today's fast-paced world, people rarely have the time or inclination to uncover and appreciate the talents and merits of others. Dressing well and in a manner that reflects how you wish to be perceived can effectively communicate your identity without uttering a word.



**Lakshmi S Biju**  
HND Art & Design (Fashion)  
- Pearson, UK



People who dress elegantly and always appear put together are often seen as valuing themselves, which in turn encourages others to value them as well. Well-dressed individuals are also perceived as more successful and trustworthy.

Beyond external perception, the personal and internal benefits of dressing masterfully are vast. It's no secret that certain outfits and styling choices can boost our confidence, thereby elevating our self-esteem and self-image. Some colors can uplift our mood, while others may not have the same effect. Certain silhouettes can make us feel more comfortable in our own skin, reducing worry and stress, while others might do the opposite.

Dressing to impress is an often-underestimated way of asserting your presence and significance. By mastering the art of dressing well, you not only boost your self-assurance but also pave the way towards greater success and prosperity.

Enjoy the power of a polished appearance to enhance both your confidence and potential.

# THE GOAT LIFE

## A REVIEW THAT WILL BLEAT YOU AWAY



"The Goat Life," not to be confused with a lighthearted farm flick, is a cinematic experience that will leave you breathless, heartbroken, and ultimately hopeful. This recently released Malayalam film, directed by Blessy, isn't just a movie; it's a visceral journey into the harsh realities faced by migrant workers.

Based on the true story of Najeeb, a man who leaves his Kerala home for a better life in the Middle East, the film takes a dramatic turn. Najeeb's dreams of providing for his family are shattered when he finds himself forced into slave-like labor, herding goats in the unforgiving desert.

Prithviraj Sukumaran delivers a powerful performance as Najeeb, portraying a man stripped of his identity and clinging to the remnants of his humanity. The vast, desolate landscapes mirror the emotional barrenness Najeeb experiences, further amplifying his struggle.

"The Goat Life" isn't just about physical hardship; it delves into the psychological torment of isolation and the fight to hold onto one's spirit. The film doesn't shy away from its themes, showcasing the brutal realities some migrant workers endure. However, amidst the despair, a glimmer of hope emerges. Najeeb's relationship with the goats he herds becomes a poignant symbol of resilience and the unexpected connections that can form in the direst circumstances.

This isn't a film for the faint of heart, but it's a necessary one. "The Goat Life" is a testament to the human spirit's ability to endure and a stark reminder of the struggles faced by many in the pursuit of a better life.

Blessy's masterful direction and the hauntingly beautiful cinematography make this a film that will stay with you long after the credits roll. Don't miss this powerful and thought-provoking exploration of hope, resilience, and the human condition.



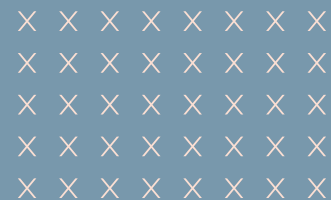
**Derisha Mercy**  
BA (Hons) Accounting & Finance - University of Gloucestershire



# WESTFORD FOSTERS A SENSE OF COMMUNITY WHERE STUDENTS FEEL SEEN AND SUPPORTED

**W**hy did you choose to study at Westford University College?

I chose to study at Westford University College because it provides a friendly and active college environment, as well as a diverse variety of high-quality courses that correspond with my professional objectives.



**Which activities in the classroom do you enjoy the most?**

I appreciate the wide range of classroom activities, particularly interacting with instructors and participating in interactive learning methods including educational games, industrial tours, debates, and group discussions.



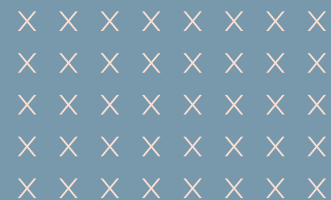
**Ritik Kumar**  
BSc (Hons) in Business Management – CCCU

**How is Westford different from other universities?**

Westford stands out because it offers an excellent education at an affordable cost, making quality learning accessible to a diverse range of students.

**How would you describe the college atmosphere?**

The college atmosphere at Westford is very friendly and welcoming. It fosters a sense of community where students feel supported and encouraged to succeed.



**How has your learning experience been so far?**

My learning experience at Westford has been fantastic. The faculty members are extremely knowledgeable and approachable, which has enhanced my academic journey.

# NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

## IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979 and celebrates its National Day on April 1st. This day represents a momentous occasion for the nation's cultural identity. In Iran, people gather to celebrate their shared history and unity, creating a festive mood with colorful decorations and flags adorning the streets. Traditional Persian music fills public spaces, enhancing the celebratory atmosphere.

Culinary traditions play a significant role in the festivities. Families enjoy dishes like saffron-infused rice, various kebabs, and an assortment of sweet treats, including ice cream. After meals, it is common for families to gather and share stories while brewing fresh Persian tea. Children participate in the festive cheer with poetry readings that reflect Iranian rituals.

On this day, Iranians express their elation, happiness, and pride in their rich history and vibrant culture. The celebration of National Day underscores the unity and cultural heritage that define the nation.



**Pouneh Shiari**  
MBA with Healthcare  
Management,  
Abertay University

## SIERRA LEONE

### CELEBRATING RESILIENCE

The day of independence of formerly colonized nations around the world is always poignant and colorful, with citizens celebrating national sovereignty, while reflecting on the national journey so far. Sierra Leone, my homeland, is one such nation. On April 27th, 1961, before my time, and after 150 years of British colonial rule, my father's generation lowered the Union Jack of Great Britain, and raised the vibrant colors of green, white and blue, to signify the independence of the republic of Sierra Leone, a small resource rich nation in the west coast of Africa. Sixty-three years on, April 27th, amidst our numerous challenges, brings a sense of national pride.

Naturally, our Independence Day is recognized as a national holiday, and its celebration is a showcase of the unity in our diversity through our arts and culture. Traditional masquerades from the 18 ethnic groups come together in every corner of the country to show off their skills; a parade of the forces is held at the national stadium from where the president gives a televised speech. Families cook their best meals and share with neighbors. In my family, we celebrate this day by driving around to determine the best masquerade and admire the smiles on the faces of compatriots that have little reason to smile.

Sierra Leonean spirit has remained buoyed through the ages, from surviving the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, civil war, natural disasters, pandemic to unnecessary hardship. Thinking of it, it is that spirit that illuminates our national day, such that we do not just celebrate our independence, we also celebrate our resilience as a people.



**Sheikh Omar Kamara**  
MBA with Operations and  
Project Management,  
Abertay University

# NEW WESTFORDIAN ON THE BLOCK



**Ananthakrishnan. P** | Officer- Admissions

**Mantra @ Work** : Having a positive mindset and pushing myself towards my goals

**Quote you live by** : Make it happen, don't wait for miracles

**Creative Vent** : Listening to music, Playing football, Travelling.

**Sony Mathew** | Video Editor

Think creative and work effectively : **Mantra @ Work**

You can start over each morning : **Quote you live by**

Filmmaking, listening to music, travel : **Creative Vent**



**Sumaiya Naidu** | Officer- Operations

**Mantra @ Work** : To give my absolute best in everything I do.

**Quote you live by** : "Every small unselfish action nudges the world into a better path"

**Creative Vent** : Traveling solo

**Dr. Roshan Jameel** | Associate Faculty

"Collaboration and innovation are the keys to success" : **Mantra @ Work**

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do." – Steve Jobs : **Quote you live by**

I enjoy reading about technological advancements, engaging : **Creative Vent**  
in academic writing, and indulging in culinary experiments.



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