

THE SEREN NETWORK

Supporting Wales' Brightest



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

The story so far

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The vision of former Secretary of State for Wales, Paul Murphy MP – now Lord Murphy of Torfaen – the Seren Network was established in 2014 to provide pupils and teachers with the support they need to ensure more students reach their academic potential and progress to the UK's top universities.

Initially comprising three regional pilot hubs, the network has expanded rapidly. At the start of the 2016-17 academic year, it will have grown to 11 hubs, covering the whole of Wales and helping more than 2000 students reach their academic potential.

At the beginning of each academic year the brightest and most applied students are invited to attend their region's hub, based on their fantastic GCSE results.

You will see through the following pages how the network has supported their future aspirations.

The Seren Network hubs

- 1 Flintshire & Wrexham
- 2 Swansea
- 3 Rhondda Cynon Taff & Merthyr Tydfil
- 4 Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire
- 5 EAS Consortia (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen & Monmouthshire)
- 6 Cardiff
- 7 Neath Port Talbot, Powys & Bridgend
- 8 Conwy & Denbighshire
- 9 Anglesey & Gwynedd
- 10 Ceredigion
- 11 Vale of Glamorgan



Meet some of Seren's brightest sparks



Jessica Berry

Jessica Berry is a Treorchy Comprehensive School pupil with aspirations to study cardiology. She gained her place on the Seren Network after getting three A-stars and nine As in her GCSEs – despite falling ill during her exams. Jessica, from the Rhondda, said, "The Seren Network is really exciting. Being chosen has made me more determined to do well in my A-levels and give myself the best possible chance of getting into one of my top choice universities."

Myles Davies

Myles Davies is currently studying for his A-levels at Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone. He took his place on the Seren Network after gaining a combined 14 A-stars and As in his GCSEs. He said: "It was such a good feeling to be told I've been chosen as one of Wales' brightest students. Meeting like-minded students and hearing from people who have gone to leading universities has enthused me for the future." Myles plans to apply for a place at Cambridge to study medicine.



Ryan St. Amand

Ryan St. Amand, from Monmouth, joined Seren after achieving seven As and three Bs in his GCSEs this summer. He said: "I love jazz and musical theatre, so all the universities I want to go to have a big drama aspect. Seren is giving me the opportunity to visit a lot of different universities, see how they do things and find out about different courses. All of this you might not be able to find on the internet, so being on the network has already been a huge help."



Jodie Jeffs

Jodie Jeffs from Marford near Wrexham joined the Seren Network after gaining eight A-stars and two As in her GCSEs at Darland High School. She's now working towards her A-levels at Coleg Cambria Yale and hopes to study journalism or law at university. Jodie said: "It's an honour to be considered among some of the top students in my area, and it's good to know there is a support network I can turn to if I need guidance on applying to university."



Katie Thorpe

Cardiff resident Katie Thorpe was asked to join the Seren Network after achieving eight A-stars and four As in her GCSEs at Radyr Comprehensive School. She plans to study either history or medicine at university. Katie said: "By taking part in the Seren workshops with academics from some of the UK's top universities, I hope I can have a taste of university learning before I go, so I know what to expect and how to adapt when I get there."



Megan Howells

Megan Howells from Merthyr took her place on the Seren Network after performing impressively in her GCSEs at Bishop Hedley Catholic High School. Now studying at Coleg y Cymoedd, she aims to read law or politics at university and aspires to be an MP. Megan said: "I'm expecting the network to give me opportunities to meet experts and prepare for university applications and interviews."



Seren Peregrine

Crickhowell High School pupil Seren Peregrine, from Bwlch in Powys, joined the Seren Network after achieving a combined 13 A-stars and As in her GCSEs. She plans to use the support offered by Seren to help her identify her perfect course and university. She said: "I'm so glad this network exists as I don't know exactly what I want to do. It's comforting to know there's help available at what can be a confusing time."



Stephen Hughes

Stephen Hughes, from Llanelli, took his place on the Seren Network after achieving 10 and half A-stars in his GCSEs. He now wants to fulfil his ambition of studying geography at Oxford. He said: "I want to aim high and Oxford is my goal. A place on the Seren Network is a massive asset as it offers some amazing resources that are only minutes from where I live. Oxford was on my radar before, but now I'm getting the practical help I need to hopefully get there."





What to expect

There are many ways you'll benefit as a member of the Seren Network. Now your academic talent has been officially recognised, you'll get to:

- Visit leading university campuses
- Take your subject skills to the next level with expert teaching support
- Extend your knowledge beyond the A-level curriculum to attract the very best universities
- Meet the leading academic lights from top UK universities and get face-to-face advice and support
- Take part in workshops alongside other talented students
- Get practical tips on applying for university places and preparing for interview
- Build links and friendships with other bright sparks looking to reach their academic potential
- Receive expert advice on personal statements and applications



The people behind the early hubs

The Seren Network's 11 hubs are partnerships between secondary schools and colleges, supported by local government, Welsh Government and leading universities. Partner institutes work together closely to develop a support programme for the brightest young minds across their region. Each hub is led by a hub co-ordinator; highly experienced individuals from a range of teaching backgrounds. Meet a selection of the hub co-ordinators:



Siân Farquharson
EAS Consortia
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sewalesas.org.uk

Siân has worked in post-16 education for over 20 years, and is currently part of the Education Achievement Service for South East Wales. She said: "There's great diversity in South East Wales, creating a rich tapestry of cultures, outlooks and aspirations among our young people. By bringing Seren learners together, we know that they will raise each other's aspirations and share ideas, ambitions and opportunities to increase the number of offers from the UK's top universities. Universities have been very responsive in their support of the South East Wales Seren programme, and we're delighted to have them on board for what we hope will be a long-term relationship which will benefit a wide range of learners in our schools and colleges."



Graham Kelly
Flintshire & Wrexham
hecsl@hecsl.co.uk

Graham is a former lecturer and Cardiff University graduate, who established a consultancy company offering advice on student progression to university in 2004. He said: "We believe that Seren gives us the opportunity to raise the aspirations of able students. We're hoping we can help students understand that places at Oxford and Cambridge and other top universities are within their grasp. By offering Seren students a series of 'stretch and challenge' activities throughout the year, we encourage them to develop their own thoughts and articulate their views on a range of topics. This will increase their confidence when attending university interviews and beginning their studies."



Stephen Parry-Jones
RCT & Merthyr
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rctcbc.gov.uk

Stephen is a retired deputy headteacher who read history at Oxford in the 70s. He said: "At university, a lot of my friends were from South Wales comprehensive schools, but this has become less common-place – despite the region having many great minds. Seren students are asked to confront their subjects in unfamiliar ways, and we hope that when they apply for university in a year or so, they'll be comfortable in even the most challenging situations. It's about getting our students to raise their aspirations in terms of their A-level grades and the universities they consider."

University partnerships



"The Seren Network provides students with an excellent foundation to apply for competitive and selective university courses. The activities build confidence and resilience, as well as developing subject knowledge. These are qualities that admissions tutors value when determining who should receive an offer."

Mike Nicholson, Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions, University of Bath

"Choosing a university can be one of the most formative decisions of a young person's life. Therefore it is essential that students have access to relevant advice and guidance to help inform their decision-making. Seren aims to provide this support, inspiring young people to achieve their academic potential and encouraging them to make competitive applications to leading universities."



Ruth Meighan, Schools Liaison Officer, Cardiff University



"The Seren Network offers students an exciting opportunity to stand out from the crowd when they apply to university. Through the events provided, students will develop a deeper understanding of a subject and make a better application to university."

Anne-Marie Canning, Director of Widening Participation, King's College London

To find your region's
hub co-ordinator visit:
www.gov.wales/seren



More than 2000 A-Level students are currently part of the Seren Network.

Get in touch

If you have any questions about your participation in the Seren Network, however big or small, please speak with your teachers or hub co-ordinator. Your hub co-ordinator's contact details can be found on our website, where you can also get more information on all things Seren. Visit: www.gov.wales/seren

We'd also love to hear about your experiences and achievements on the programme.

Please keep us updated across social media, join the conversation at:

 facebook.com/serennetwork

 [@Seren_Network](https://twitter.com/Seren_Network) [#serennetwork](https://twitter.com/serennetwork)