

Student Talk

Miho, Emi and Suzuyo – Konnichi wa Japan!

We have had a regular group of Japanese students coming along to our events this year, and also helping with preparing Afternoon Teas on Monday afternoons. On one of these afternoons, we caught up with our friends. So, tell us how you got to hear about BISC? **Emi:** I found out about BISC through the Welcome table at the Fresher's Fair on the Downs, and I then told Miho! **Suzuyo:** Well I already had heard about BISC through finding the website before arriving in Bristol. I signed up online for a few of the events, but didn't know yet where to come and pick up the tickets! Then I found out where BISC was and came along! *What do you like about coming to BISC?* **Emi:** I feel like it's my second home, I can make friends here and meet them here again and again. **Miho:** It's difficult to meet friends in or after our classes, but at BISC I can meet many special people. **Suzuyo:** Yes, firstly I want to say that I really love BISC and it is a good opportunity to make friends. And I like the events, like the Alpha, and the Conversation Café and the trips.

Tell us about your study and why you chose Bristol? **Suzuyo:** Bristol was top of my options for university, I'm studying English Literature. Bristol is not too big and not too small, it's beautiful. And I was impressed by the Wills Memorial Building!

Miho: I like Bristol as it seems like quite a traditional British city. I am studying International Relations. We are exchange students on an undergraduate programme. **Emi:** I had 2 options, US or UK – I chose UK! – Bristol seemed to be a comfortable city to live in. *And your first impressions of the UK?* **Suzuyo:** the weather changes a lot! **Emi:** it's cold! *And British food?* **All:** We shouldn't talk about it! No comment! ..seriously – it's interesting, and we like the sweet food – cakes and puddings! *One piece of advice for new students?* **Suzuyo:** If you are international students and want to make friends, BISC is a good place to come!

Benjamin and Sandra – Hola Mexico!

Benjamin & Sandra have been in Britain doing their PhD studies since 2015. *Tell us about yourselves:* **Ben:** we're from Yucatan in Mexico and we met at high school. Sandra came first to Bristol to do her Biological Sciences PhD (in area of Genetics) and I followed in 2016, firstly to do a Masters in Computer Science and now I'm doing a PhD too, particularly in the area of machine learning (Artificial Intelligence). *What do you like about living in the UK?* **Sandra:** how easy it is to get things - like the postal system and internet deliveries really work well here. Also that people get involved, if they don't like something they complain or come out to say what they think, like about the Environment or Brexit! **Ben:** yes it's informed activism, being a part of democracy, people are encouraged to think and have an opinion. *Food-wise?* We like Sunday roast and full English breakfast; we have learnt how to taste and like certain food, like fish and chips! *What has surprised you about the UK?* **Sandra:** well, the alcohol consumption seems quite high, not what we're used to; also that Banks have open counters, rather than bullet-proof screens! *And what sort of difficulties have you come across as overseas students coming to the UK?* **Sandra:** a lack of confidence – I'm not in the same position as a GB student, I have a different background and education to them, and so initially I was insecure of my performance. **Ben:** relating to language, being afraid of being impolite, having to be careful how you speak, not to offend. Also not feeling part of the community – at first we feel we're on the outside, because only here for a few years. But having friends through BISC and our studies has helped us get to know British customs and traditions. *What do you miss about your country?*

Sandra: – family! **Ben:** – the food! Oh, ok, family and food! *How did you hear of BISC and what have you enjoyed doing with us?* **Ben:** we got info through the university and a friend invited us along to the soup lunches. We have been to Stratford and other places too. **Sandra:** we've really liked the Conversation Café this year, as it has given me confidence, meeting with British people rather than just internationals, and chatting English. Also being invited to people's homes, where they have been so open and welcoming. Thank you!!



Emi, Miho and Suzuyo enjoying a BISC Tea!



Ben and Sandra in the comfort of the BISC lounge

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Summer News

2018

A Next exciting Season of Growth

This has been a wonderful year for welcoming and caring for the well-being of so many international students who have come to Bristol. The amazing BISC Team, including our volunteers, have done a remarkable job in developing a 'Centre for well-being' for students who joined the BISC community. From the initial Welcome, to many trips, evening events and weekly meals - the BISC Team and dedicated volunteers have cared for every international student whom they've met. See the photo gallery on www.bisc.org.uk or all the interaction on facebook (www.facebook.com/biscbristol) to see the fun and the generous, caring atmosphere created!

More students, More space and More Team Members

The number of international students coming to study in Bristol continues to increase. As numbers increase, there is always a need for more space at the BISC Centre for welcoming and supporting all our friends from across the globe.

We are delighted that work has been completed on our new extension to the BISC building which has given us a more comfortable and welcoming environment for accommodating larger groups at the many social events. The extra space has made it possible to enlarge our community and created a comfortable setting for the support of individual students. We are so grateful to everyone who helped make this possible. As planned, we have also grown the Team with the welcome addition of Tirzah and Grace to strengthen the existing Team of Jacqueline, Ann, David and Martine.

We are strategically developing the BISC Alumni (*BISC Family Abroad*) and love to hear encouraging messages and stories from students who have returned home. When you have had an opportunity to reflect on your time in Bristol or if you want to introduce something of the BISC ethos in your home university, town or city - be in touch! We would love to continue to build the BISC community across the world. Please send us photos, video clips, social media/email messages, sharing your life and all you are experiencing. At BISC we are one big global family and team - and we would love to support you and hear from you, whether you are living in Bristol, have returned home, or have relocated to another part of the world.

Rob Scott-Cook (VICE-CHAIR OF TRUSTEES)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Welcome 2018
4 - 28 September

International Reception
20 October

Prayer Meetings
1st Thursday of the month, 10.30 - 11.30am @ BISC

7 June
5 July
2 August
6 September
4 October
1 November
6 December

bisc Family

Join BISC Family Abroad
(newly established alumni & friends network)

As many of you prepare to return to your home countries, after spending a wonderful time at BISC in this beautiful and kind city of Bristol, why not join our *BISC Family Abroad* group. We would love to keep in touch, to organise BISC meet-ups whenever we visit your home cities and make sure you continue the lively interaction with one another, you so enjoyed here at BISC. To join, simply email jacqueline@bisc.org.uk with two contact details (e.g. a current email address; WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook or Skype account details), referencing *Joining BISC Family Abroad* in your subject.

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Join the BISC Family Abroad

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45 Woodland Rd, Clifton BS8 1UT
0117-915 9826
bisc@bisc.org.uk



Welcoming the World

The Welcome...

This September will again be a busy time as we aim to welcome students from all over the world in doing Meet and Greet activities at the stations, and as we welcome new students at Welcome Desks during International Tea Parties at the Student Unions, and at the Fresher's Fairs. Could you help this year?

The dates are: **Tuesday 4th September to Friday 28th September**, with evening meals at BISC from Friday 14th to Tuesday 25th September.

We will again have need for Drivers, taking students from the bus or train stations to their accommodation, for Welcome Meal cooks (as individuals or with a group), and for homes to be made available for emergency accommodation. If you think you could help in these ways, then do please contact us at BISC from 6th August - email bisc@bisc.org.uk or phone 0117 9159826. Many Thanks!

International Reception...

We will also have our largest event of the year, the International Reception, to be held at the Woodlands Centre on **Saturday 20th October** where we welcome up to some 700 students from around the world. This is a tremendous opportunity that we have to give wonderful hospitality to so many students at the start of their first year in the UK - and your contributions would be gladly received to make this possible! Every cake, pizza, salad or fizzy drink given by our supporters is of great help to the team in organising such a huge event - do let us know if you are able to provide food for us (we will be sending out a request for this by email nearer the day), and/or to help on that Saturday to set up/clear up and with serving during the evening itself. Thank you!

New Biscits

Our Best Wishes to Friends Moving On

In December we said goodbye to Matt who moved onto a new job with North Bristol Foodbank, to Sini who returned to China in January, and to Kim who left in February to spend more time with her family. We will soon say farewell to Martine who returns to the Netherlands in June after completing her studies. We are so grateful for all you have contributed to BISC over these last few years, and all the hard work you've put into leading trips & events, the teas & lunches, and so many other aspects of BISC life! All the very best for your future, dear friends!

Welcoming New Friends

In January/February we were pleased to expand the core team by welcoming two new staff members. **Tirzah** is the new full-time *Operations & Events Manager*, and comes from Shropshire. She holds a B.A. Hons in Theological Studies and a Post Graduate Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults. Leisure activities high on Tirzah's list are swimming, a wide variety of crafts, off-roading, reading and spending time with friends. Tirzah has also holidayed in places such as France, Germany, Mallorca, Poland, Spain and the United States.

Grace is from Bristol and is our new *Assistant Manager*. She holds a B.A. Hons in English Studies and Theatre Studies. In her free time Grace enjoys painting, writing, reading, watching films and spending time with family and friends, having meals and going to the theatre or playing board games. Grace has visited Venice, South Africa, Sydney, Cairns, France, Germany and Spain. Together with Jacqueline (Director) and core team members Ann and David - and not forgetting our invaluable volunteer teams! - we aim to continue to make BISC a true *home away from home* for all the students who pop in at the centre to buy tickets for our events, who join us for weekly meals or who just want to be here for a chat and time to chill out!

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Mayor Marvin Reese & UoB PVC Erik Lithander with BISC friends at the International Reception 2017



Assistant Manager, Grace Kirby



Operations & Events Manager, Tirzah Jones

Building for the Future



Before & After: Building for the future

Over the summer of 2017 the builders were busy coming and going at the back of the BISC premises, and wonderfully we could see the new extension to BISC taking shape before our eyes. We were particularly thankful that the last main items were completed the day before our first Welcome meal! Carpet fitted, ceiling lights unveiled, and the chance to put up new tables in time for the large numbers of students arriving in Bristol for

the first time. And a new green turf laid in the garden where the diggers had been!

We wish to convey our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed so generously towards our Building Fund over the last few years so that this much needed extra space could be made ready for BISC at the start of this academic year. **THANK YOU TO ALL OUR BISC FRIENDS!!**

Students on Team

Time on the Team – Student Helpers report

During the Autumn Term we were happy to welcome **Sini** to our Team and she proved to be a real asset in willingly giving her time to assist us in all aspects of the work. She enjoyed baking, soup-making, helping on the Saturday trips, and welcoming students at BISC and at the International Café at UWE. Sini has now returned to China and is teaching English in an International School near to her home. This is what she told us about her involvement at BISC: *The more I came to BISC, I feel that BISC is a real home for me. Because I really love the British culture and this big family at BISC, when I finished my course I asked Jacqueline if I could stay and help until my visa expires. I stayed with a generous host family and so this enabled me to give my time to this special charity. It's also been great working with the BISC team and I feel so impressed and touched by the love and care of my BISC family.*

We are also incredibly grateful to **Martine** from the Netherlands who has given us sterling help over more than 3 years at the BISC centre. Martine has been doing her Ancient History PhD whilst helping out at several of our BISC events, leading Saturday trips, being a vital part of the Monday baking team, and all manner of other help for the team. She says: *BISC is a home, a family! It is my community!* We will miss Martine as she comes to the end of her studies and returns to the Netherlands.



Team members Martine, Bonnie, Sini, Matt and Kim having fun at a BISC event

Open Hearts & Homes

...Our Local Link Hosting Scheme

As new students arrive, we love to invite them to link up with our BISC supporters on our Local Link Hosting scheme. The students meet hosts during the 6 months to a year that they are in Bristol (or longer!) and are always so grateful for the chance to meet local people. Hosts often invite their students for a meal in their home, or take them around local sights or a trip out to the countryside. We would love to expand our list of hosts so that we can invite more students to join up and enjoy some time away from their study and their student lodgings. This last year we have had some 20 hosts welcoming over 45 students; and at Christmas & the New Year there were about 9 hosts who invited 19 students round for the celebrations. If you would like to be involved in this lovely opportunity to welcome students whilst they are away from home OR if you would like to find out more about our NEW initiative: *Local Link Abroad*, to be launched in Autumn 2018, please email bisc@bisc.org.uk or phone 0117-915 9826 for more information.

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For more on Student Talk, see overleaf...