

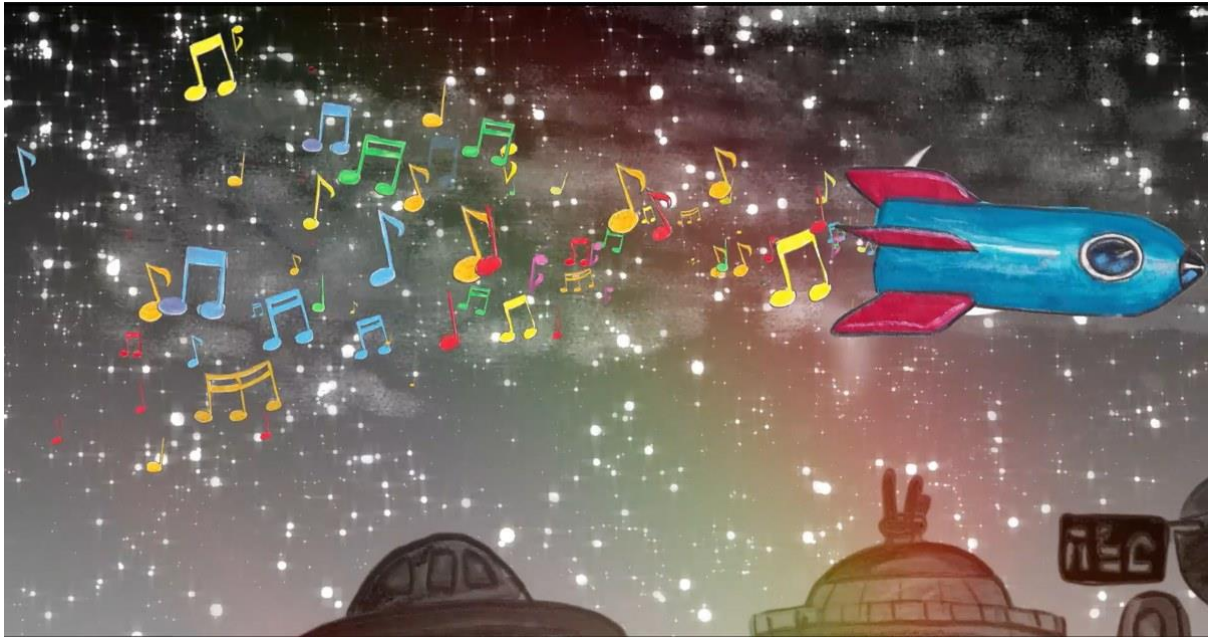
# UCL iMerc Newsletter — Vol. 4, January 2024

## About us

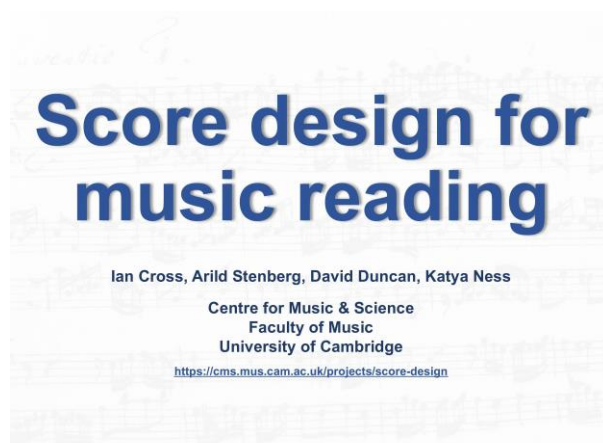
Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, we have been meeting regularly to share new research and insights related to diverse topics in music education, broadly conceived. We are a group of researchers at doctoral and post-doctoral levels, as well as senior researchers, with a shared curiosity and interest in advancing basic and applied research. Our monthly seminars are also designed to foster a sense of community amongst colleagues who are based in the UK, mainland Europe (Portugal, Germany, Greece), Asia (China, including Hong Kong) and Australia. Opportunity is taken each month to update current research projects and also to listen to the latest research from our invited speakers. If you would like to know more or to join us, please contact us.

Our upcoming research seminar is on Wednesday, 24th January 2024, 11.00-13.00 UK Time. This will be held on Zoom and in room 938 at the IOE. We are very happy to have Dr. Jeehye Hwang, Dr. Gregory Boardman, and Alice Bowmer speak to us. Please join by clicking the Zoom link [HERE](#). Everyone is welcome!

## In This Issue



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- *Previous iMerc Research Seminar, November 2023*
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1 - Presentation cover slide presented by Professor Ian Cross

Our guest speaker, Professor Ian Cross ([ic108@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ic108@cam.ac.uk)), introduced the [Score Design](#) project at the Centre for Music & Science, Faculty of Music, University of Cambridge. The project explores ways in which conventional Western musical notation can be minimally adapted so as to suit it better for the functions that it presently fulfils. Ian guided us to explore ways in which conventional notation can be tweaked to make it work better when musicians use it to help them perform. Ian also shared bits of how the team was embarking on a range of experiments and clarified which types and degrees of modification were likely to be most effective for different musical purposes and contexts.

Dr. Elizabeth Haddon ([liz.haddon@york.ac.uk](mailto:liz.haddon@york.ac.uk)), our guest speaker, shared her recent study, *Iran Piano School: community, pedagogy and remote researching*. Despite the daily challenges relating to politics, religious beliefs, resource mobility, conflict and communication, it is evidenced that through the engagement of around 400 students of varied ages, working with around 25 teachers, the piano school Liz worked with appears to be flourishing. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews and questionnaire data from the school's leaders, its piano, theory and solfeggio teachers, and from questionnaire responses from pupils and their parents, Liz guided us to understand and learn from this study, while exploring the pedagogical practices and understandings of community arising within this specific case.

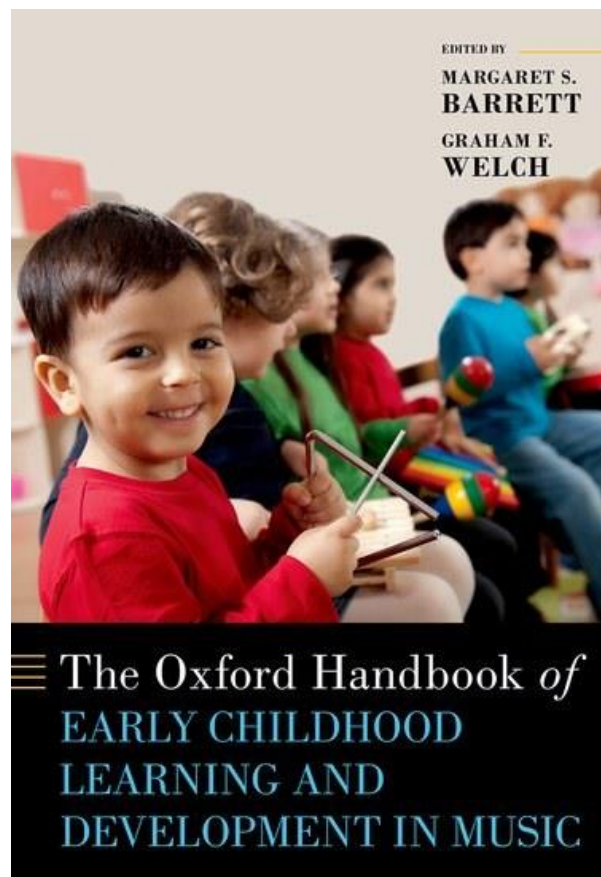
• Iran Piano School:  
Community, pedagogy  
and remote  
researching

Dr Liz Haddon  
22/11/23



2 - Presentation cover slide presented by Dr. Elizabeth Haddon

Newly published: The Oxford Handbook of Early Childhood Learning and Development in Music, November 2023



Margaret S. Barrett (ed.), Graham F. Welch (ed.)

Published: 15 November 2023

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190927523.001.0001>

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Publisher: Oxford University Press

### **Abstract**

Investigation of the role of music in early life and learning has been somewhat fragmented, with studies being undertaken within a range of fields with little apparent conversation across disciplinary boundaries, and with an emphasis on pre-schoolers' and school-aged childrens' learning and engagement. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Childhood Learning and Development in Music* brings together leading researchers in infant and early childhood cognition, music education, music therapy, neuroscience, cultural and developmental psychology, and music sociology to interrogate questions of how our capacity for music develops from birth, and its contributions to learning and development. Researchers in cultural psychology and sociology of musical childhoods investigate those factors that shape children's musical learning and development and the places and spaces in

which children encounter and engage with music. These issues are complemented with consideration of the policy environment at local, national and global levels in relation to music early learning and development and the ways in which these shape young children's music experiences and opportunities. The volume also explores issues of music provision and developmental contributions for children with Special Education Needs, children living in medical settings and participating in music therapy, and those living in sites of trauma and conflict. Consideration of these environments provides a context to examine music learning and development in family, community and school settings including general and specialized school environments. Authors trace the trajectories of development within and across cultures and settings and in that process identify those factors that facilitate or constrain children's early music learning and development.

## End-of-year Gatherings, December 2023



3 - Online Gathering Front Slide

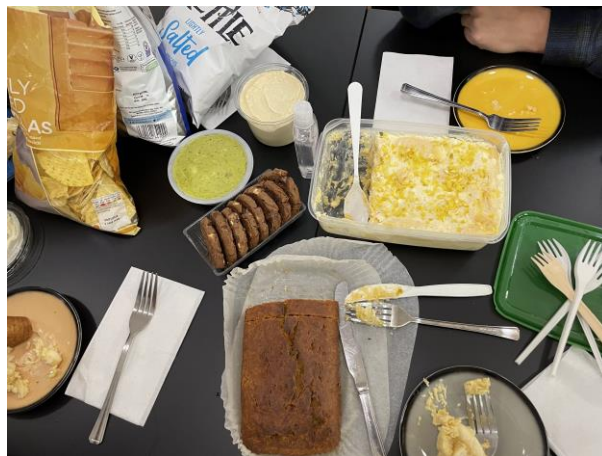


4 - In-Person Gathering Poster





5 - Front (Left to Right): Dan Wang, Shike Guo, Pak Hang Wan; Back (Left to Right): Eunice Tang, Yunjie Wang



6 - Crisps, cookies, and dips (Yunjie), Crisps (Shike), Lemon cheesecake (Pak), Banana cake (Eunice)

## iMerc Research Seminar, January 2024



7 - Speaker: Dr. Jeehye Hwang

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**Speaker: Dr. Jeehye Hwang**

*Topic: How do older adults perceive and engage in active music-making in the digital age? - Exploring lived experiences of instrumental learning and playing after retirement in South Korea*

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**Dr. Jeehye Hwang** ([jeehye.hwang.18@alumni.ucl.ac.uk](mailto:jeehye.hwang.18@alumni.ucl.ac.uk))

Jeehye completed her undergraduate degree (B.A.) in instrumental music performance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, where she specialised in violin. She completed her M.A. in music therapy at New York University, USA and music education at Kingston University London, UK. In 2023, Jeehye completed her PhD in music education at University College London, Institute of Education. Her doctoral research focuses on exploring older adults' lived experiences in instrumental music learning in the digital age. Jeehye worked as a music tutor and a music therapist in community centres, children's hospitals, and local social welfare agencies in South Korea. At UCL, Jeehye worked as a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant for the M.A. in Music Education (2020-2021). She is an Associate Fellow (AFHEA).

Jeehye was awarded Grand Challenges Doctoral Students' Small Grants from UCL. She conducted an interdisciplinary project called 'Creatively Connected: Investigating the Impact of Creative Arts-based Online Support Groups for University Students with Disabilities in South Korea during the COVID-19 Pandemic'. She has presented her research works at poster conferences at UCL (2020, 2021) and conferences and seminars in Germany and the U.K.

### **Jeehye's Abstract**

The ageing population has prompted a shift in the understanding of ageing, with studies emphasising the advantages of musical engagement in later life (Hallam & Creech, 2016). While the literature has explored singing and listening to music (Petrovsky et al., 2020; Wattanasoei, 2017), there is a paucity of research on playing instruments in older adulthood. Additionally, the advent of digital technologies has introduced new ways of experiencing music (Creech, 2019), yet the coordination and comprehension of digital music technology use among older adults remain unexplored.

This presentation discusses my doctoral research, which explores the nuances and subjective experiences of learning and playing musical instruments and using digital music technology among retired older adults in the current digitalisation phase. The research involved ten retired older adults learning musical instruments at community centres in South Korea. In-depth semi-structured interviews with artefact elicitations were conducted, and the data were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), shedding light on the complexities of their musical experiences and implications for post-retirement life.

Key findings highlight the significance of contextual and personal factors in learning and playing musical instruments post-retirement. Motivations for musical engagement intersected with life transitions associated with retiring from full-time work, demonstrating a desire for social and emotional benefits during this period. Also, digital music technologies, including online platforms like YouTube and music-related smartphone applications, were integrated into music practices, with participants valuing them as accessible tools for autonomous learning. Finally, the findings suggest that learning and playing musical instruments is a meaningful form of community participation after retirement, fostering personal development and social connectedness.

Overall, my doctoral research highlights the importance of meaningful music participation in the lives of retired older adults, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of ageing and challenging societal perceptions.

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*Speaker: Dr. Gregory Boardman*

*Topic: Musical meaning-making in the later stages of primary education*

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8 - Speaker: Dr. Gregory Boardman

**Dr. Gregory Boardman** ([gregory.boardman.15@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:gregory.boardman.15@ucl.ac.uk))

Completing an MA in Music Education at IOE in 2018, Gregory subsequently registered for a part-time PhD in Music Education in early 2020. Gregory's research aims to explore participation in instrumental music-making, barriers to access and meaning-making in relation to historical, dominant, and progressive models of musical learning.

Originally graduating with a bachelor's degree in music from Durham University, Gregory completed a PhD in Music Composition at Keele University in 2003. Academic study has always been conducted



alongside a career as a producer of media content for young people. With multiple nominations from the British Academy of Film and TV Awards (BAFTA) and as a winner of Broadcast, Montecarlo Television Festival and Kidscreen Awards, Gregory is active as a television, music and event producer working with the likes of the BBC, SKY, Channel Four, Channel Five and the British Film Institute. Projects have included titles such as Rastamouse, Apple Tree House and As If. In the past decade, Three Stones Media, the production consultancy co-founded by Gregory, has expanded its interests in screen content to include delivering music education projects in a variety of contexts for several music hubs, the English Chamber Orchestra and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

### **Gregory's Abstract**

Gregory's iMerc presentation provides an update on the progress of his PhD study exploring participation in instrumental music-making, barriers to access and meaning-making in relation to historical, dominant, and progressive models of musical learning.

It was hoped the pilot data collected for his PhD study during 2021 & 2022 might call for only minor modifications to his methodology before embarking on the main body of data gathering for his thesis. However, despite a wealth of valuable data, focus groups conducted as part of the pilot data collection proved to be significant and exerted a pivotal influence on the direction of the research. These data highlighted the need to make a significant adjustment not only to the methodology but to the theoretical frameworks supporting Gregory's approach.

The key research questions remain fundamentally the same. However, reflections on the initial data suggest a need to put more emphasis on 'multimodality' (Kress, 2011) and consideration that the felt musical experience 'resists being put into words' (Gascoigne & Thornton, 2013). Embracing the potential for multimodality in the research methodology has created certain challenges. More importantly, we might ask what are the implications of multimodality on classroom practitioners if words alone fail to capture what might be observed (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

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*Speaker: Ms Alice Bowmner*

*Topic: Supporting infant language development through parental singing*

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*9 - Speaker: Ms Alice Bowmer*

**Alice Bowmer** ([abowm001@gold.ac.uk](mailto:abowm001@gold.ac.uk))

Alice is a musician, violin teacher and researcher who began teaching music in 2008 with children aged 6 months – 6 years. Alice now runs a music teaching practice where she works with pupils between 6 - 18 years, as well as supporting community music projects for preschool children. Alice's research evolved from a desire to understand more about how her students were learning, both musically and in other aspects of their development (motor function, language and cognition). Her experience suggests that careful attention to all of these elements is highly effective when helping children to learn new skills.

Alice won an ESRC studentship in 2020 and is currently working on her PhD which examines the links between music and language during infancy with Professor Lauren Stewart at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Alice is an honorary research associate at the UCL Institute of Education and co-founded the research group 'Music and Cognition' with Dr Kathryn Mason. Their current research looks at how music and arts training can impact upon executive functions, speech, language, and communication skills. Alice is eternally grateful to the support of Professor Graham Welch, whom she has worked alongside since 2014.

### **Alice's Abstract**

Speech, language and communication needs for children prior to starting school is a pressing concern in the UK. Approximately 25% of young children have a speech, language and communication need, and most of these persist into adulthood (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017). Additionally, there is evidence that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more at risk from the consequences of not developing their language sufficiently to thrive at school (Nuffield Foundation, 2016).

This talk will summarise an ongoing feasibility study working with parents in two areas of the UK, which aimed to support infant language development via parental singing. The project employed a weekly, multi-group, parent-baby class intervention, which ran for 16-18 weeks. Our main objective

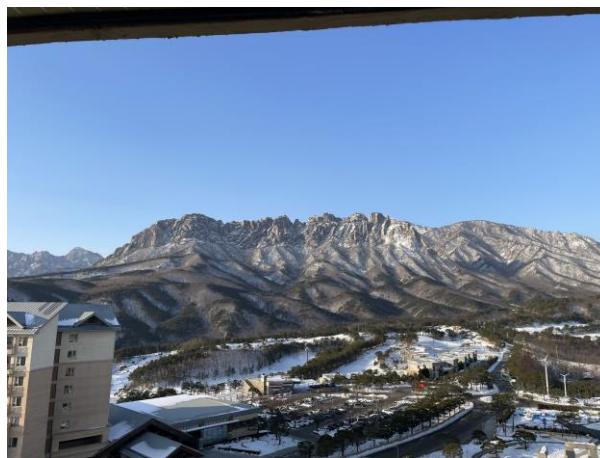
was to empirically test whether singing classes supported infant language skills more than similarly designed physical/cognitive classes. Further evidence was collected on parents' use of singing in the home. Alice will share a discussion of her project status and research findings to date.

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## In Conversation with Dr. Jeehye Hwang, January 2024



10 - The mountain view is one of Jeehye's favourite mountains to visit. It is called Ulsan Rock and is in the province of Kangwon-do, South Korea.



11 - Dr. Jeehye Hwang's family picture with her parents and her brother's family. This was taken a few months ago on her lovely niece's birthday. The left at the back is Jeehye.

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***Dr. Jeehye Hwang passed her doctoral viva and received her Ph.D. in November 2023. Here is an interview about her doctoral experience.***

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### **1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

My name is Jeehye Hwang. I am from South Korea. I majored in violin for my undergraduate degree in the US. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I studied music therapy at Graduate School. So, I got my first master's degree in music therapy in the US. Then I came back to Korea. I worked as a music therapist and music tutor, working with children with various disabilities in different settings such as community centers, children's hospitals and social agencies. After some years working as a therapist and a music tutor, I pursued another master's degree in music education in the UK. I began my doctoral study in February 2019 and received my Ph.D. in November 2023.

My doctoral study explored how older adults perceive and engage in learning and playing musical instruments after retirement in the digital age. It's about how they perceive learning musical instruments after their retirement and how they use digital technologies to learn musical instruments. Because South Korea is a country where the use of smartphones and the Internet is prevalent among older adults, I was curious about how they use their digital technology for learning music among older adults. So yeah, this is my educational background in brief.

### **2. This is great! Can you tell us more about your doctoral experience?**

My doctoral study began in February 2019. The first year was about taking courses, research skills courses and doing some volunteer work because I was interested in the older population, older adults. I was volunteering in London, in community centers where older adults participate in various community activities, including music and other leisure activities. I did that for the first year until the upgrade viva in February 2020. I also had a great time with colleagues at IOE.

After the upgrade in February 2020, the pandemic hit. I was in Korea doing a pilot study for two months but couldn't return to London because of the pandemic. I then stayed in South Korea for one and a half years. I had to change the whole research plan because I originally wanted to do a comparative study between the UK and Korea. But I couldn't go back to London. I wanted to do focus groups but couldn't since all community centers were closed. I did interviews with participants only. During that time, I stayed in Korea for data collection and analysis. At the beginning of 2022, I returned to London because of my visa. I spent three months in London and had supervision. After that, I returned to Korea to write my thesis. I have to write the thesis alone here in Korea. It was quite an experience to do a doctoral study during the pandemic. Thankfully, I managed to write up and complete my viva in November 2023.

### **3. It was indeed quite an experience! What do you enjoy most at the IOE?**

I think the IOE is quite a diverse environment. You can meet many people from various backgrounds, not only from music education but also from people from various fields. You can meet people from various fields outside the IOE when you go to the research skills courses. Connecting with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives was a very valuable opportunity. I also took advantage of taking courses about interviewing people, tips for conducting qualitative and quantitative studies, how you can manage your study time, etc. You can take as many courses as you want, so it was an enriching experience.

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*"It's important to enjoy the time. I miss staying in the doctoral rooms at the IOE, surrounded by fellow students engaged in discussions about each other's research interests. But because of the pandemic,*

*people had to return to their homes. So my advice is to make the most of your time as it swiftly passes."*

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#### **4. What would you like to explore if you got a chance to stay longer in London?**

If COVID didn't happen, maybe I would do a comparative study because my initial plan was to do a comparative study between Korea and the UK. Also, I would conduct data collection methods like focus groups and observations.

#### **5. You're brilliant at adapting to the situation and being flexible.**

Initially, I was frustrated that I was thinking about taking a break like some of my friends did. It was challenging at the beginning because you never know what would happen, whether the pandemic would just disappear or continue... nobody knew. It was frustrating then, but my supervisors were very supportive. We talked a lot online. I would like to thank my two supervisors, Professor Evangelos Himonides and Dr Ross Purves, for being very supportive and flexible. They were very open to my opinion and my circumstances.

#### **6. How did you prepare the doctoral viva? Any tips to share with us?**

I was worried at the beginning, but I did mock viva with my supervisors, which was very valuable. After finishing writing your thesis, which is hundreds of pages, you simply cannot remember everything you write. At that time, I was thinking, should I remember everything that I wrote for... how should I prepare? Mock viva helps. Your supervisors are also examiners for other students, so they know what the viva would be. They asked questions that examiners might ask, so responding to them was really helpful.

Also, examiners are not expecting perfect answers for everything. It's not like they ask me a question, and then I must give a definite answer. They sought to understand my expertise and how I engaged with my study. They wanted to engage in a productive dialogue about my research. It is not like they want to find some errors in my research. They were curious about my research and asked why I did it, the rationale behind my research, and so on.

Also, they are the people who approach my work with fresh perspectives. Supervisors are the people who know my work from the beginning. They know the things that I did. But examiners are the people who just read my work and have some fresh perspectives, like things that you haven't thought about before. It was a good opportunity to explore my study from different perspectives and lenses beyond your ingrained knowledge. I think Viva was like another exploration of my work.

When I looked back, my viva was quite long. It was almost three hours online. Overall, it was an excellent opportunity to discuss my research. Examiners were very open to the answers that I provided. It was an excellent dialogue and discussion about my research.

#### **7. Do you have any advice for our doctoral colleagues?**

It's important to enjoy the time. I miss staying in the doctoral rooms at the IOE, surrounded by fellow students engaged in discussions about each other's research interests. But because of the pandemic, people had to return to their homes. So my advice is to make the most of your time as it swiftly passes. London, being an international city, offers many experiences beyond your studies. You can take a break during the weekend. Doctoral studies don't have a specific break time, so it's really important to balance focused study periods with specific moments of leisure. Take advantage of your



weekends, explore the city, and enjoy London's diverse offerings. A doctoral study is not just about focusing on your studies but also about taking good care of your physical and mental health.

## Upcoming Research Seminar, February 2024

Please pencil down our next research seminar on Zoom, which will be held on Wednesday, 21st February 2024, from 11-1 pm. More details soon!

## Contact Us

Visit us on the website at <http://www.imerc.org>

Professor Graham Welch: [graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:graham.welch@ucl.ac.uk)

Professor Evangelos Himonides: [e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.himonides@ucl.ac.uk)

Ms Eunice Tang: [eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:eunice.tang@ucl.ac.uk)