I gratefully received the Queen Mary Expedition Fund in Summer 2012, in order to take part in a four week Russian language course at the Lomonosov State University, Moscow.

Living in Moscow is both comparable to, and different from, life in London. The city is extremely expensive and rent is similar to that in London. I lived in a flat in a southern suburb, in a room that I shared with another student. The accommodation was organised by the university and we shared the flat with our landlady, her daughter and an elderly neighbour. The area was fairly quiet and suburban, though well resourced, with shops and parks nearby. The metro and bus station were also just a short walk away. In contrast to London, the Moscow metro is cheap and very reliable; during my entire month there was no disruption at all to the tube service. Central Moscow was easily accessible by metro and the university, which is situated in southwest Moscow, was a forty minute marshrutka ride away.

Moscow State University is the largest university in Russia, with around fifty thousand students. The language school for international students runs over the course of the whole year, though most visitors enrol for the summer classes. Courses take place five days a week, between 10am and 1pm. On arrival at the university, an informal assessment is carried out, where the course administrator decides the level of the students' Russian language skills and places them in groups accordingly. Class sizes vary, as students constantly arrive and leave, having completed their studies. My class had between 5 and 10 students who came from all over the world, including Brazil, Japan, Germany, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Sweden and the USA. This created a very strong learning environment, as the common language spoken between the students...
during breaks or after class was normally Russian, further improving our conversational skills. The course itself covered a variety of topics, such as grammar, spelling, speaking and listening, as well as an additional course on Russian history. Some of the teaching methods were not what I have previously encountered at QMUL; every morning we began the class by taking a dictation, based on words we had read in our history class. In general, however, the classes had a friendly, informal atmosphere, where all students were free to converse and ask questions.

Moscow is also a cultural centre, which many attractions and things to see and do. Students of the university receive a student card which can be used to obtain discounted entry to many museums and art galleries. The university also organised some trips, where an accompanying teacher acted as a guide. For example, we visited the grounds of the Kremlin and the Kremlin churches and museums. There were also some less formal outings, such as boat trip along the Moskva, which made a change from purely classroom based environment. We also had plenty of free time, when we were not at university, when we could meet with other students and enjoy the city.

As a student of BA Russian, the month I spent in Moscow has been invaluable to my studies. I was not only able to improve my level of Russian in a classroom environment, but also experience life in the city. I was able to practice using Russian in day to day situations, which is something that is more difficult to do in London. Ideally, I would have liked to stay even longer, in order to improve my Russian skills further. In the future I would like to undertake similar language courses, though would perhaps prefer to visit other cities within Russia, to see how they compare to Moscow.