

Cumberland Lodge

Empowering conversations

Our educational mission

We can't change what we don't understand. That's why, in a world of extreme inequality and political polarisation, we believe it's not our differences that divide us, but our inability to recognise, discuss, debate, and respect those differences.

Cumberland Lodge is an educational charity and social enterprise that exists to empower young people to lead the conversation around social division. Providing them with the skills, perspective, and confidence, to question, challenge, and understand, some of the most complex social issues of our time.

Set in the heart of Windsor Great Park, this is a space for challenging conversations. An open door to new perspectives. Where great minds don't always think alike.

A place where a multi-generational, intercultural, cross-sector programme of conferences, talks, and events, means that people from all walks of life can come together to be seen, heard, and understood.

A space for common ground. Where open dialogue can close divides. And the leaders and change-makers of the future can learn how to agree to disagree, better – creating a more peaceful, open, and inclusive society, one conversation at a time.



How we work

We provide a tranquil environment for challenging discussions using bespoke facilitation methods, tried and tested over the years but continuing to evolve to meet changing needs and circumstances.

Cumberland Lodge is a historic Grade II-listed building located in secluded and inspiring grounds in Windsor Great Park. Converted into residential conference accommodation, it features 58 bedrooms, 14 diverse indoor meeting spaces, three dining rooms, bar facilities, a common room for social activities, and beautiful gardens.

Day-to-day running of the Lodge is entrusted to our charity of the same name. We operate the facilities as a social enterprise, hosting multi-day residential retreats, workshops, conferences, and similar events on a commercial basis for groups of up to 100 delegates. Our regular clients include university departments, legal and medical training bodies, and many other public sector, private sector, and not-for-profit organisations.

We use the profits from our operations to fund our team of educational experts, who work tirelessly to design and deliver our own ongoing programme of educational activities. Every conference and event booking helps to support this work.

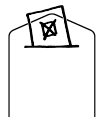
Our 2024 educational programme

Our Programme Team delivers a range of workshops, conferences, and digital content. These are designed to explore the causes and impacts of social division in order to promote more inclusive and just societies.

Our activities are youth-centred, supporting the development of ethical leadership through intergenerational, intercultural, and cross-sector dialogue.

Key areas of focus for our programme include:

Youth & Democracy



Our flagship project brings young people together from across the country to re-imagine politics and political systems for the UK that will generate better democratic outcomes in the future. It is driven by the concerns and views of young people, including those from marginalised backgrounds, to ensure they are heard.

Strengthening the Rule of Law



Working with our partner organisations, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, the College of Policing, and Big Voice London, we are

developing young people's understanding of the way laws are made, contested, and enforced.

Three residential workshops will be held each year with 24 young people from the UK and Commonwealth countries, supported via online resources, facilitated webinars held between retreats, and an online peer-to-peer network.

Exploring Ethics



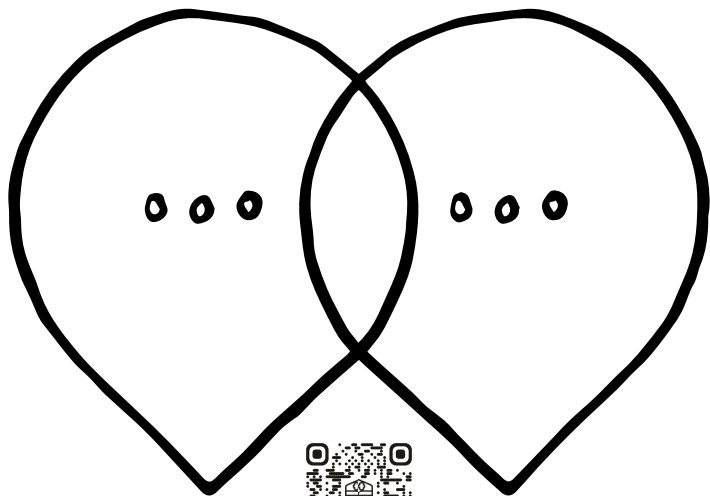
Underpinning all the work that we do is the development of ethical leadership skills, empowering young people, and ourselves, to think about what a “good” society might look like and how we might create it.

Reflective and interactive, the sessions are designed to help students to reflect critically on the ethical dimensions of contemporary social challenges.

Visit cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/learn to find out more about our programme.

‘I pondered on some of the fundamental questions that I barely think about.’

Exploring Ethics participant, July 2023



Scan the QR code to watch a short video about our work.

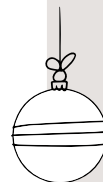
Student conferences

Cumberland Lodge delivers two highly-regarded, interdisciplinary, residential student conferences, with the aim of creating a space for participants to learn together, to build networks, understand differences, and enjoy themselves.



Life Beyond the PhD

We bring together doctoral students from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines, to explore the value and potential of academic research, foster collaboration, and develop public engagement skills, as well as providing space to reflect on how research and academic careers might promote more inclusive and just societies.



International Student Christmas Conference

Students from all over the world who are studying in the UK enjoy thought-provoking seminars and workshops, meet others studying away from home, participate in intercultural dialogue, and experience a British Christmas. We design a programme to inspire discussion and debate on contemporary themes, such as “how to argue better with people we disagree with”.



Fellowships

The Cumberland Lodge Fellowship offers doctoral students in the UK the opportunity to benefit from a close association with our educational programme.

During the two-year fellowship, students will deepen their understanding of pressing societal issues from a cross-sector perspective. At the same time, they will develop valuable skills in public engagement, networking, communication, and interdisciplinary working.

Nine Cumberland Lodge Fellows are selected each Spring through a competitive application process. This is open to doctoral students from universities and higher education institutions across the UK. A 10th is nominated by the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara), which supports international academics at risk of persecution, conflict, or violence in their home countries.



‘Now more than ever, it’s vital we learn and practice how to talk together across our differences. That’s why I’m proud to be a Fellow at Cumberland Lodge.’

John Coggin, Cumberland Lodge Fellow 2022-24



Our venue



Cumberland Lodge is available to hire for conferences, meetings, away days and special events such as weddings, throughout the year.

We offer elegant overnight accommodation, spacious grounds and comfortable facilities, perfect for residential or non-residential events. Our bedrooms are intentionally “low-tech” to help you reflect and unwind, with en-suite bathrooms, writing desks, and parkland views.

Our award-winning chefs can tailor our menus to suit your needs and dietary requirements and we pride ourselves on our locally-sourced produce.

We are located just 15 minutes from the M25, M4 and M3 motorways, and regular train services to London Waterloo and Paddington, and 20 minutes from Heathrow Airport. There is free parking on site.

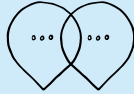
‘Wonderful, inclusive and transformational experience. The depth and quality of discussions is unsurpassed.’

Varun Srivatsan, retreat participant 2024

Scan the QR code to take a virtual tour.



In 2022-23 we:



- Recruited our 10th Fellowship cohort, with PhD expertise ranging from human rights in Myanmar to gravitational wave astronomy.
- Ran a pilot partnership with St George's House, Windsor Castle, enabling our Fellows to participate in consultations on pressing societal issues.
- Hosted the inaugural Fellowship Retreat for global environmental initiative The Earthshot Prize, including a visit from the Prince of Wales.
- Received accreditation as a Real Living Wage Employer – recognising our commitment to paying staff according to the true cost of living.
- Expanded our programme of cultural and outreach events, which included our annual Shakespeare Reading Retreat, a sustainable opera concert, and our seasonal Dining Club.

In numbers:



Our International Student Christmas Conference involved **45** students from **23** countries and **17** universities.



Our Life Beyond the PhD conference brought together **43** doctoral students from **16** universities.



We welcomed **48** medical groups to the Lodge, involving **1,448** junior doctors, and the Inns of Court brought **578** students training to be barristers.



We hosted **64** university departmental study retreats involving **2,804** students, **8** of whom received free places from our bursary scheme.



Towards a more sustainable future



At Cumberland Lodge, we are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and to moving towards carbon neutrality – and ultimately Net Zero Carbon – as soon as possible.

We're working hard to embed sustainable practices across all our areas of activity, setting our priorities in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and focusing on three main areas:

- reducing our carbon emissions
- adopting renewable sources of energy
- improving our waste and recycling rates.

Our greenhouse gas emissions have been independently measured and our baseline numbers will be included in the overall footprint for Windsor Great Park.

We are already taking action across many areas, including reducing our food and drink waste, and will be working with The Crown Estate on further practical solutions.

The location and age of the Lodge will make some aspects of this work more complex than others, but we are committed to doing everything we can to move towards a more sustainable future.



Visiting us

While Cumberland Lodge is not open to the public on a day-to-day basis, there are frequent opportunities throughout the year for us to open our doors to new and returning visitors. We run a vibrant programme of cultural and outreach events, ranging from talks and tours to dinners and exhibitions.

These include our Cumberland Conversations series, where we welcome a range of guest speakers to talk about their life and work, with the opportunity for the audience to ask questions.

Our popular Dining Club events offer an opportunity to enjoy a themed three-course menu in our historic dining rooms.

A sell-out event in our calendar is our annual Shakespeare Reading Retreat, where we welcome guests for four days of discussion and activities, each year focused on a different play.

Private tours of the Lodge are also available on weekdays, subject to availability, for groups and societies to learn more about the history of our beautiful 17th century building and how it became the home to our charity.



Scan the QR code to see our upcoming events.

Timeline

1943

Our mission to create more peaceful, open, and inclusive societies begins with a remarkable book, *Darkness over Germany*, written by our founder, Amy Buller. It provides a warning from history, recounting the rise of Nazism amongst students and academics in Germany in the 1930s, and reminding us of the need to maintain dialogue in times of change and discord.

1944-47

The book is recommended to Queen Elizabeth, and as a result, King George VI offers Buller the use of Cumberland Lodge to set up an educational foundation, which opens in 1947.



International students come to the Lodge for a Christmas gathering, beginning a long-standing tradition which continues today.

1948

The first British university students come to the Lodge, from King's College London, Liverpool University, and University College London.

1950s

Conferences are taking place at the Lodge. Philosophy is an early area of focus, but over the decades other emerging themes include law, religion, social inequality, democracy, and the environment.



Notable visitors during the 50s include poet and literary critic TS Eliot, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, philosopher Karl Popper, and novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch.

1960s

The foundation is registered with the Charity Commission, under the name The King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's.

1970s



The Mews building is restored and re-opened by the Queen Mother, with Amy Buller present. In subsequent years, the bedrooms in the main Lodge are upgraded with en-suite facilities and we start to take residential bookings for conferences, meetings, and special events, to help support our charitable activities.

1980s

We launch our own conference programme, starting with an event on "Media and the Police". Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher makes two visits to the Lodge to discuss pressing issues including the NHS and the welfare state.

1990s

Following a refurbishment and the creation of new meeting rooms and breakout spaces, The Mews re-opens as a fully equipped, modern conference facility.

Notable visitors to the Lodge include Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

2000s

We become an incorporated charity known simply as Cumberland Lodge. Queen Elizabeth II becomes our patron (2003-2022).

2010s

Notable visitors include poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy, then Home Secretary Theresa May, and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The first cohort of 50 students are recruited for our Emerging International Leaders Programme.

The Cumberland Lodge Scholarship (now known as the Fellowship) launches.

2017 -
today



Darkness over Germany is republished for our 70th anniversary. Its message, and our mission, remain important to this day.



Support our work

Thousands of young people already come to Cumberland Lodge each year, attending study retreats and participating in our discussions on challenging and topical ethical subjects. As part of our five-year strategic plan to 2027, our aspiration is to:

- further improve the quality and relevance of our programmatic activity and increase the number of young people we reach;
- start building a national and then international movement of young people committed to social progress; and
- undertake a programme of on-site capital investment designed to enhance the experience of the guests who visit the Lodge each year.

As well as investing our own resources to realise our ambitions, we are seeking additional funding to support what we do. We welcome donations from those who value our work, share our concerns about the polarised and hostile nature of much public discourse, and wish to invest in the ethical development of young people who are emerging as leaders and influencers.

For details about how you can get involved, visit cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/support-us

Our people

Here are just a few members of the team that makes our work possible.



The Rt. Hon the Baroness Prashar of Runnymede
Chair of Trustees



Canon Dr Ed Newell
Chief Executive



Mike Durham
Chief Operating Officer



Professor Melissa Butcher
Programme Director



Merril Ryan
Hospitality Director



Rob Szewczyk
Head Chef



Nicola Hine
Communications Manager



Sarah Mann
Meetings & Events Manager



Christina Ogwang
Programme Officer



Munny Purba
Programme Officer



Natalja Lipka
Programme Administrator



Sally Craig
Dining Room Supervisor

What our guests say about us

‘We had the most seamless experience... I know and would like to fully recognise that you went the extra mile for us.’

LSE LIFE, 2023

‘The trainees really appreciate the relaxed atmosphere which is so therapeutic and lovely respite from their “full on” training placements!’

Kingston and Roehampton GP Registrars, 2022

‘Top marks as a venue for comfort, suitability for the event and catering, and for those delegates new to Cumberland Lodge, well, they can’t wait to come back again.’

Partners for Leadership, 2022

‘Our guests were well looked-after throughout... I know that the distinguished speakers and participants from around the world enjoy the special atmosphere.’

European Policy Forum, 2022

Get in touch

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Scan the QR code to sign up to our
monthly e-newsletter and receive
updates on our latest news,
events and resources.



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