

# Newsletter

## DESS College



Term One is nearly always the busiest term of the academic year and, as I write this introduction to our second newsletter of the year, I am aware of how much we have been able to achieve in such a short space of time. We always talk about how quickly the time passes at the College, and this term has been no exception.

This newsletter aims to touch upon just a few of the amazing experiences that our DESS College students have been able to participate in. I hope you enjoy spending some time reading the articles that our staff have put together to remind you of the opportunities that our students have been able to engage in this term.

Particular highlights for me this term include attending the Remembrance Service at the British Embassy, watching our incredible Chamber Choir perform to such a high standard in front of international dignitaries and invited guests. It made me so proud to hear those guests speaking so highly of our talented singers whilst I was sat in the audience. On the sporting front, the standout achievement of the term has to be the recent crowning of the U19A Boys Rugby Team as the winners of the U19 Gulf competition at the Dubai Rugby 7s. However, the pride that we felt as they lifted the trophy was equalled by us witnessing the effort and enthusiasm that all the Rugby and Netball teams put into their own matches.

On a cultural note, our celebrations of Union Day and Flag Day were both hugely enjoyable and a reminder of the heritage and history of our host nation.

I hope that you have a wonderful break, that you are able to spend time with those who are close to you and that all our DESS College families return safe and well for Term Two, which is promising to also be crammed with activity and exceptional experiences.

With kind regards

**Matthew Cotgrove**  
Head of School

### EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

The Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) department has enjoyed teaching our Year 7 students about the famous Mexican celebration El Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead). Students not only learnt about the unique customs and traditions surrounding this festival, but they also participated in a skull-making competition. We were so impressed by our students' creativity! Huge congratulations to our winners who received a Día de los Muertos-themed goody bag and House Points for their respective Houses:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Atharva Chauhan and Mitansh Gawale (Desert)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Isla Illingworth (Coast)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Ibaad Mustafa (Earth)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Ilia Brennan (Sky)

In the spirit (pun intended!) of this festival, we invited other year groups across the College to learn about this event by engaging with our wonderfully informative display board. Students were asked to scan a QR code to answer a few questions about the event. Well done to our winner Edward Dominique Dy who answered all the questions correctly and won a Día de los Muertos-themed-goody bag.

### Native Speakers

We are lucky enough to have several native speakers of French and Spanish at the College. In Year 7, our Languages Assistants work with them in small groups to improve their grammatical accuracy, particularly when writing, through a variety of activities. This half-term, our French native speakers enjoyed getting involved in a Guess Who game which involved them accurately describing Guess Who images and finding their matches around the Coast House atrium.

### Dual Linguist Marhaba Morning

We are very excited to be hosting our very first Marhaba Morning for the MFL department in the new year. This event will initially be for the parents of our Dual Linguist students in Years 8 and 9. The aim of the event is to give more of an insight into the workings of the Dual Linguist programme, and to also explain the benefits of taking both languages at GCSE. Please look out for a letter which will be sent to you in January inviting you to this event.



## UNION DAY CELEBRATION

On Thursday, 28th November, DESS College came together to celebrate the UAE Union Day with pride, joy and cultural richness. The event was a remarkable showcase of Emirati heritage, beautifully crafted to honour the Nation's spirit and traditions.

The day began with an awe-inspiring assembly, led by our talented Emirati students. Through their performances, they highlighted the rich history, culture and values of the UAE, leaving the audience inspired and filled with national pride. At the end of the assembly, the UAE National Anthem was performed with heartfelt passion by our talented Arabic staff, leaving everyone moved and united in their love for the Nation.

Following the assembly, the famous Emirati fayre became the heart of the celebration. The fayre buzzed with activities that brought Emirati culture to life. Students and staff enjoyed traditional henna designs, indulged in the delicious flavours of authentic Emirati cuisine, admired the elegance of Arabic calligraphy and engaged in traditional games. The presence of a camel and a falcon added a captivating touch, symbolising the deep connection between Emirati heritage and the natural environment.

This celebration was not just an event but a heartfelt tribute to the UAE, its culture and its people. It was a day to remember, filled with joy, learning and shared pride in the country we all call home.

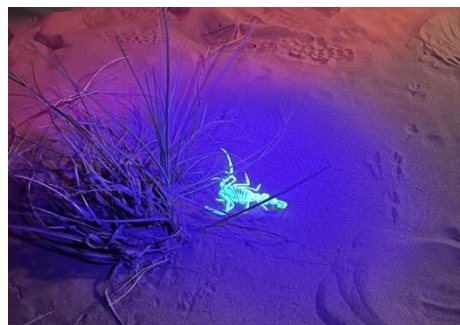


## YEAR 9 DESERT SAFARI OVERNIGHT TRIP

Year 9 students embarked on an overnight trip to the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, immersing themselves in the beauty of the Arabian Desert. This experience offered our students a mix of adventure, culture and bonding, leaving everyone with cherished memories.

The students set up camp and spent the night in tents under the starlit sky, a refreshing change from their usual surroundings. The day was filled with thrilling activities, such as dune bashing, a nature night walk and a camel ride across the sweeping dunes.

As the evening settled, students gathered around a campfire to enjoy a mesmerising dance and fire show. The trip encouraged students to unplug from their devices and truly connect with one another, enjoying meaningful conversations and shared laughter. It was a memorable experience that students will undoubtedly treasure for years to come.





## THE DUBAI 7s

The Dubai 7s is always a highlight on our calendar as such an incredible event that provides our students, their families and everyone else involved with the College a weekend to embrace the best of what Dubai has to offer. With impressive entertainment away from the sporting arena, it was fantastic to see our 7s student teams competing at the highest level in Netball and Rugby, as well as multiple staff and alumni enjoying those and other activities including Cricket, Padel and CrossFit, providing the entertainment on it! What makes the Dubai 7s so special to us is seeing all the familiar faces around the grounds and the sea of red supporting each other.

Our teams got off to a brilliant day one with some outstanding performances displaying the hard work the students and staff have been putting in over the last few months. The early morning conditioning sessions with Miss Beighton and Mr Gerber, extra support in the gym from Mr Arthur and late-night games sessions had clearly paid off for those who had put in the work. Day two brought the final rounds of the group stages for the Netball, with another day of teamwork and skill on show taking them into the knockouts in a strong position near the top of the seedings. In Rugby, our B girls had a couple of nail-biters in the group and knock-outs stages, which also saw our A girls compete well against a strong French side to reach the final four after topping their group. Our boys met in the Cup quarter-finals, giving us two teams in the top eight of the competition, showcasing the depth of talent at the College across both sports.

Sport, especially 7s, happens quickly, and sadly our girls ran out of time to reach their first Rugby final. Similarly, our Netball girls reminded us why the highs in sport are so high, as they fell at the next hurdle despite being strong favourites. Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out, so our girls will be back in the sporting arena and pushing on at the next opportunity, we're sure of that and can't wait to support them!

The rollercoaster of sport gave us an immense high as our U19 Boys stepped up to the occasion to produce their best performance of the tournament to triumph over Dubai College in a superb advert for rugby in the UAE on Pitch 1 in front of a packed-out stadium. We are incredibly proud of them, and all our teams of students, staff and wider DESS College family who did everything they could to put their best foot forward and support each other over the weekend.

Bring on the upcoming DASSA leagues, World School Festival and sport tours!





## THE WOMAN IN BLACK – KS5 THEATRE TRIP

This half term, our KS5 English Language and Literature students had the opportunity to attend a performance at the Zabeel Theatre of the spine-chilling play 'The Woman in Black'. The trip was designed to inspire our English Language students as they begin to craft their monologues or creative writing pieces for their Original Writing NEA. Additionally, the trip served to deepen our English Literature students' understanding of the Gothic literary genre. The gripping (and occasionally hair-raising) performance captivated the students from the very start, leaving them inspired and eager to delve into the play's themes. It was a truly unforgettable experience that brought literature to life in a dynamic and engaging way, offering an invaluable opportunity for our KS5 students.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

Our College Chamber Choir had the honour of performing at the British Embassy's Remembrance Day service, delivering moving renditions of *The Road Home*, arranged by Stephen Paulus, and *Sing Gently* by Eric Whitacre. Both pieces were carefully chosen to reflect the solemnity and reverence of the occasion, their harmonies filling the embassy with a sense of peace and unity. *The Road Home's* beautiful melody conveyed a message of comfort and remembrance, while *Sing Gently* offered a hopeful reminder of togetherness. The choir's performance was met with deep appreciation from attendees, underscoring the power of music in honouring those who have sacrificed for peace.



## LIFE OF PI

Our Year 11-13 Drama and CAPA students embarked on an unforgettable visit to the Etihad Arena to watch the critically acclaimed stage production of *Life of Pi*. Adapted from Yann Martel's award-winning novel.

The play brought to life the remarkable story of Pi Patel's survival on a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger, blending breathtaking visuals and emotional depth.

The students were captivated by the stunning set design, incredible puppetry, and the actors' powerful performances, which vividly portrayed themes of resilience, faith and the human connection to nature. Students reflected on how the play expanded their understanding of storytelling and stagecraft through the magic of live theatre.



## ITALIA CONTI

The Year 13 CAPA students recently had the exciting opportunity to participate in a mock audition workshop led by Italia Conti, a renowned name in the world of performing arts. The workshop simulated a professional audition process, providing invaluable insight into what casting directors look for and how to stand out during auditions.

Students were guided through each stage, from preparing their material to handling feedback, with a strong focus on enhancing their confidence and performance skills. Moreover, students were put through their paces during challenging technical and contemporary dance routines before singing solo musical theatre numbers to the panel. Italia Conti's expertise and engaging approach left students feeling motivated and better equipped to navigate future auditions in their performing arts careers.

This workshop was an unforgettable experience for our students, helping them take one step closer to their dreams.





## OUR ANNUAL COLLEGE WINTER SPECTACLE

Our annual College 'Winter Spectacle' concert was a resounding success, bringing together students, staff and families for an enchanting evening of music and dance performance. The concert showcased the diverse talents of our students, from orchestral and choir performances to dynamic dance numbers and captivating theatrical scenes (including a number of cameos from teaching staff). Highlights included seasonal classics of *Silent Night* and *Stille Nacht* followed by modern favorites, along with a stunning finale of *Slade's Merry Christmas Everyone*, that had the audience on their feet. The energy and joy shared by performers and spectators alike truly embodied the festive spirit, making this Winter Spectacle a memorable celebration for everyone involved. Congratulations to all students and staff who made this magical night possible!



## INTRODUCING MEDIA CAREERS TO DESS COLLEGE

As Media teachers, one of the most frequent questions we hear from parents is: **"Where will studying and creating media take my child?"** A decade ago, answering this question may have felt more speculative, but today, with the explosion of the 'creative economy', the possibilities are richer than ever. The demand for individuals who can think creatively, craft compelling stories and produce impactful media has surged across industries - from marketing and film production to gaming and social media management.

To introduce our Key Stage 3 (KS3) students to the world of media and the exciting opportunities it presents, DESS College recently hosted a guest speaker, Andrew Smith from Raindance Film School in Dubai. His visit was part of our initiative to broaden horizons for younger students, giving them a taste of Media Studies and prepare them for their future subject choices.

Andrew delivered an engaging talk centered on how to navigate a career in the media industry. He highlighted several key themes:

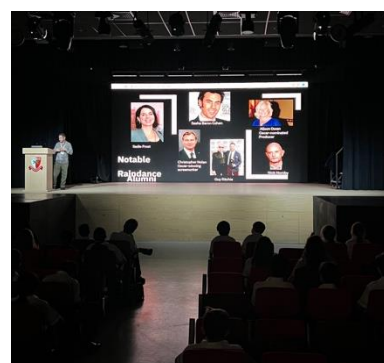
**The Values and Drive to Succeed** - Success in media requires resilience, self-discipline and a passion for storytelling. Andrew shared inspiring anecdotes of individuals who turned their creative sparks into successful careers through perseverance and hard work.

**Effective Storytelling** - At the heart of all media lies the power of storytelling. Whether you're making a blockbuster film, designing an ad campaign or crafting a viral TikTok, the ability to connect with an audience through a well-told story is essential.

**The Art of Networking** - Andrew emphasised the importance of building relationships within the industry. Networking isn't just about who you know; it's about making genuine connections, collaborating and supporting others in the creative community.

The talk sparked enthusiasm among our students, and we were delighted to see so many curious hands raised during the Q&A session. From how to get started in filmmaking to exploring the ethics of social media, their questions showed a keen interest in understanding both the opportunities and challenges of the media world.

The rise of the creative economy means that there has never been a better time to explore media as a field of study and a career path. Creativity, once considered an intangible quality, is now one of the most sought-after skills in the job market. We are proud to provide our students with opportunities to explore their potential and encourage them to embrace the creative challenges of the future.



## THE GREAT DESSBATE HOUSE COMPETITION

In October, the DESS Theatre came alive with passionate arguments, persuasive rhetoric and thought-provoking ideas during the English Department's annual House Debate Competition. Students from Sky, Coast, Desert and Earth showcased their critical thinking skills, eloquence and teamwork as they took to the stage to address challenging topics that resonate deeply in today's world.

From dissecting societal issues to proposing innovative solutions, the debaters demonstrated that young people are not only capable of understanding complex issues but are also equipped to lead conversations that drive meaningful change. The competition was fierce, but more than the trophies and House points, what stood out was the clear and resounding reminder of the importance of listening to young people's perspectives.

Debating is more than an academic exercise; it is a powerful tool for fostering confidence and advocacy. In every rebuttal, point of information and closing statement, our students proved that their voices matter - and that they have the passion and intellect to contribute to building a better future.

Special congratulations to the winning Houses - Sky (Year 7), Desert (Year 8) and Coast (Year 9) - for their outstanding performance and compelling arguments. As we reflect on the competition, let us remember that the voices of young people are not just the voices of tomorrow - they are the voices of today.



## THE DUBAI MATHS SUPER LEAGUE

The Dubai Maths Super League is an exciting inter-school competition that challenges students to think logically and sequentially while tackling unfamiliar mathematical problems. This year's series of competitions began with our Year 8 students, who recently attended the event hosted by JESS. The event provided a fantastic opportunity for students to engage in a stimulating environment, showcasing their mathematical abilities and problem-solving skills against peers from various schools. Participating in such events provides a thought-provoking and mathematically enriching experience, allowing students to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts while developing essential skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Our Year 8 students displayed incredible talent throughout the competition, navigating complex problems with creativity and teamwork. One group in particular achieved a remarkable second place, demonstrating not only their mathematical expertise but also their ability to collaborate effectively under pressure.

We are incredibly proud of all our students who represented DESS College at the Dubai Maths Super League. Their enthusiasm and determination set a wonderful example for their peers and reflect the values we uphold within our department. Well done to all participants for their outstanding efforts and achievements. We look forward to seeing more of our students from other year groups take part in future competitions.





# EXCITING NEW GLOSSARY CHALLENGE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES STUDENTS

We are thrilled to announce the launch of the **Glossary Challenge** for all our Islamic Studies students this year! This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to enhancing English and Arabic literacy, as well as academic enrichment across the school.

The challenge encourages students to build their vocabulary, deepen their understanding of key terms and foster a love for learning. It's an excellent opportunity for them to engage meaningfully with the subject while improving their academic skills.

We look forward to seeing our students rise to the challenge and celebrate their achievements together!

2024-2025

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Year 8 Glossary competition

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

TASK: Match the correct definition to the Arabic word: /10

1. The name of Allah Watchful/Observer

2. Strong belief in Allah

3. To worship Allah as if you see him

4. Name of Allah, who is patient and forbearing

5. Name of Allah, who is the reliever of pain

6. Resurrection after death

7. To acknowledge that Allah is One, with no partner

8. The nature upon which Allah, has created human beings.

9. Weight/scales.

10. Allah created all creatures and subjected them to serve humanity.

a. الحليم (Al-Halim)

b. (Iman) إيمان

c. الوديع (Ar-Raqeeb)

d. الوديع (Al-Wahdaniya)

e. إحصان (Ihsan)

f. المغيث (Al-Mughith)

g. النشور (An-Nashur)

h. الفطرة (Al-Fitrah)

i. السبحر (At-Taskheer)

j. الميزان (Al-Mizaan)

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Year 7 Glossary competition

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

TASK A: Choose the correct terms from the box to match the prayer positions: .../8

Terms:

Ruku

Sujud

Al-Fatha

Takbir

Niyah

Tasleem

1. ...

2. ...

3. ...

4. ...

5. ...

6. ...

7. ...

8. ...

TASK B: Match the Arabic terms to the English definition: /8

Column A:

1. Makruh

2. Haram

3. Farah

4. Sunnah

Column B:

a. Obligatory

b. Optional

c. Disliked

d. Forbidden

## PROJECT ME (MORAL EDUCATION)

This term in Project ME (Moral Education), Year 11 students have been exploring ethical consumerism, reflecting on the impact of their choices on the environment and society. As part of this initiative, we organised a clothing collection and 'DESS College Swap Shop' event.

Students were encouraged to bring in any clothing they no longer needed. This was an excellent opportunity for students to swap items they no longer use, fostering a spirit of sustainability and resourcefulness.

We were also able to donate any unwanted clothing to a local clothing charity to support those in need. Thank you to the Year 11 students and their families for making the event a success.

## INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

On Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> November we welcomed Emily Laycock from the UK based immersive careers company InvestIN to the College. Emily hosted an informative employability skills session with our Year 10 students. The session focused on current labour market trends in the UK and key employability skills, which our students can be building now.

Emily also participated in our university fayre on the same day, speaking to many of the Year 12 students about the in-person and online course that InvestIN offer throughout the year to support students with their career's exploration. Further information can be found on <https://investin.org/>. They also have a discount on their summer experiences if booked before Tuesday, 31<sup>st</sup> December using the code EARLY15.

A big thank you to Emily and InvestIN for their continued partnership with DESS College!

## BTEC APPLIED SCIENCE

On the evening of Thursday, 14th November, 18 BTEC Applied Science and A-Level Physics students ventured into the desert for an unforgettable night of observational astronomy.

During this exciting experience, they learned about the constellations, explored various types of telescopes and gained hands-on knowledge of navigating the night sky. The students also had the opportunity to try their hand at astrophotography, capturing the wonders of the cosmos. The event was met with enthusiasm and the students were thrilled by the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in such a fascinating field of study.



## PHYSICS OLYMPIAD COMPETITION

On Monday, 11th November, 18 KS5 students seized an exceptional opportunity to push themselves beyond their classroom experiences by participating in the prestigious British Physics Olympiad Competition, which is run by the University of Oxford, UK.

This challenging event required them to draw upon their analytical and critical thinking skills. Students who achieve a sufficient score will earn a certificate, a noteworthy accomplishment that highlights their prowess as "very able Physics problem solvers."

Receiving any level of certification is a significant achievement, deserving recognition on university applications and earning well-deserved bragging rights among friends and family.

Congratulations to all who participated! The results are expected to be published early next year alongside the Chemistry results from the Olympiad competition which was taken in October.



## MUSHRIF PARK

On Monday, 4th November, Year 13 Biology students explored Mushrif Park for an enriching field trip, applying ecological sampling techniques such as line transects and quadrats to study desert biodiversity.

They investigated plant distribution, human impact on species diversity and used population size estimation methods, therefore gaining hands-on insights and completing key practical skills for their A Level Biology required practical assignment.



## HACKATHON AT DESS COLLEGE

The Digital Leaders and Tech Society recently collaborated to organise and host an exciting hackathon involving four schools and over 50 participants at DESS College. The event featured a mix of competitive activities, including head-to-head coding, group challenges and developing innovative solutions. These activities not only highlighted the competitive spirit of coding but also demonstrated how programming can foster problem-solving, teamwork and creativity.

The hackathon was an incredible opportunity for students to showcase their skills, learn from peers, and develop their passion for technology in a dynamic, collaborative environment.



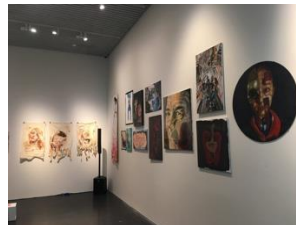
## CREATIVE ARTS

During October the Creative Arts Faculty participated in the schools showcase exhibition at Jameel Art Centre. The exhibition was part of Jameel Art Centre's 'Creative Careers Fairs' event, which brought together a range of Arts organisations and institutions from across the UAE, such as museums, foundations and universities, to share information about their programmes with visiting schools.

GCSE and A Level artworks by students from DESS College were selected to be exhibited at the event, along with those from other schools from Dubai. Creative Arts students from Years 11 to 13 also had the opportunity to visit the event and to see the exhibited work, as well as engage in discussion with the various institution representatives.

During the day students also visited various Art galleries in the Alserkal Avenue district where they were able to see a wide range of artwork and to engage in discussion with artists, curators and gallery owners.

As well as experiencing artworks at first hand and gaining inspiration for their coursework, students gained a perspective of the abundance of opportunities available here in the UAE to pursue further study or a career path in the Arts.



## DESS SITE STAFF CRICKET MATCH

DESS College site staff took on DESS Primary Oud Metha site staff in a friendly yet fiercely competitive cricket match over the Union Day weekend. Led by our own Director of Cricket, Mr Upadhyay, the College team showcased incredible passion, determination and teamwork.

The College site staff batted first, setting a challenging target with a mix of powerful strokes and smart running between the wickets. The Primary Oud Metha bowlers kept their cool under pressure, with sharp fielding and timely wickets keeping the game competitive.

In reply, the Primary Oud Metha staff put up a spirited chase, contributing crucial runs and supporting one another in the tense moments. The College staff fielded well and made some amazing catches. The match was very close and came down to the wire, however we are delighted that the College Site Staff won the match.

Congratulations to the College Site Staff, as well as to Mr Anis, Primary Oud Metha Site Team Member, who took home the Man of the Match award.

We're looking forward to the rematch in February!

