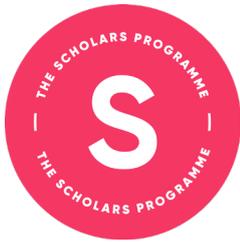


The Brilliant Club Case Study



Tutor Name:
Poonam Gunaseelan

PhD Thesis Title:
Caught between Tradition
and Modernity: Gender and
the Indian English Novel

PhD University:
School of Oriental and African
Studies, University of London

Tutor since: 2015/16

Brilliant Club Programme:
The Scholars Programme



About the tutor

Poonam Gunaseelan is a PhD researcher at SOAS, University of London.

Her PhD research focuses on representations of gender violence within the family in post 1980s Indian English novels. Her own Scholars Programme course does not centre on violence, but instead, is focused specifically on gender, understanding the advantages and disadvantages of using English as a language for literary texts in India, and critically reflecting on ideas of feminism through a study of extracts from various Indian English novels.

Poonam has delivered six placements in and around London since becoming a Scholars Programme tutor, at schools including All Saints Catholic School, Robert Clack School, Southchurch High School and Eastbury Community School.

What made you want to apply to become a Scholars Programme tutor?

I went to a comprehensive school growing up, and the only extra-curricular activities on offer were for medicine or law. I would have loved the opportunity to explore a field of study which I had never even thought of at that time. Now as a tutor, I have done placements where the pupils have all said at the start that their favourite subject was science, which used to make me quite nervous as my subject is so far away from that. But then they have ended up loving the programme!

I like The Scholars Programme because it shows pupils that you can love a subject and be passionate about it. I also think that identity is really important - as a woman of colour, I want to inspire pupils on a personal level too and show them that they can do whatever they want to in the future.



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How has The Scholars Programme helped in your development?

The Training Weekends really help me to develop and structure my teaching practice. They've given me practical support like activities and ways of communicating with the pupils. One example is playing the game Articulate in my tutorials to check pupils' progress and understanding - I've done it with Key Stages 4 and 5 and it's worked really well with both!



I also found the tutor development modules at Training Weekend very helpful - I'm at the point where I'm thinking about whether to stay in academia or not and so the session about how to market my PhD to employers made me think critically about my PhD and my personal development, as well as the different skills that I have gained.

The Scholars Programme has also made me think more about public engagement and how to consolidate my research for different audiences - I really believe that academia should engage more with other communities, it shouldn't be in an ivory tower, and The Brilliant Club has helped me to do this far more.

What's been your most rewarding moment as a Scholars Programme tutor?

I think with every placement the highlight for me is reading the final assignments at the end. Because of the baseline assessment, I can see where the pupils started, and it can actually be quite emotional to see how they have developed! Every pupil shows progress in different ways, for example the more traditionally 'high performing' pupil who is now producing work at an undergraduate level, or a pupil who was less confident at the start showing how they now understand a concept - you can really see how they have all developed.

To find out more about how you could become a Scholars Programme tutor, please visit our website at www.thebrilliantclub.org