

## **Scholarship program of the "Oxford Russia Fund" (ORF) at Irkutsk State University: implementation and results**

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**Abstract.** The process of implementation of the "Oxford Russia Fund" scholarship program at Irkutsk State University is considered; the influence of the scholarship program on the educational process and the development of students' scientific work is analyzed.

**Keywords:** Oxford Russia Fund, Irkutsk State University, liberal arts education, scholarship program, students, scientific work

In 2005, the Oxford Russia Fund (ORF) charitable organization was founded, the next year, for active cooperation with various institutions in the Russian Federation, the Fund's Representative Office in Moscow was opened, which was included in the Register of Branches and Representative Offices of Foreign Non-Profit Non-Governmental Organizations. A key ORF project is a scholarship program for students of the humanities faculties of 20 classical Russian universities. These provincial universities were selected by the Foundation in the first - pilot - phase of its implementation in 2005-2009 ISU joined the program in 2006.

The mission of the Foundation was aimed at promoting the development of humanitarian education in Russia, since the role of specialists in the humanitarian fields of knowledge in the modern world has rapidly increased, however, most of the international foundations and grant-making organizations were focused mainly on the field of natural sciences and business research.

Due to the fact that this year's ORF scholarship program is coming to an end, the purpose of this article is to try to analyze how much participation in this program over the past 15 years has been beneficial for the university and its students.

First, some statistics. Over the period of the program, a little more than 2 thousand bachelors received ORF scholarships. Since 2015, the program has been extended to undergraduates and postgraduates, 180 undergraduates and 26 postgraduates became ORF scholars from 2015 to 2021.

First of all, participation in the program affected the educational process. In a classical university, education and science must be closely interrelated things. We will not argue that without the ORF scholarship program, the link between science and education would have been impossible, but this program certainly made it more obvious and tangible. In addition, unlike many other forms of reward for scientific activity, the ORF scholarship, at a minimum, was different in that it implied

not only the need for contestants to present a set of their achievements, but also to draw up a real application for a grant, and, accordingly, developed the skills of presenting research in such a form, which is not quite traditional, at least for junior students. For many, this was the experience of the first real introduction to the academic rules of work. It should be noted that at the university, as in other universities, there is an opportunity to encourage and stimulate the student's desire to engage in scientific work with the help of an increased state academic scholarship, which is paid for special merit in a certain field of activity, including research. The ORF scholarship provided that the student is not only active in the scientific field, but also an excellent student, is engaged in social, cultural work, sports, that is, is a harmoniously developing personality.

If we consider improving the quality of the educational process associated with the development of important skills in students as a benefit for the university, then this is perhaps the most important point. It is difficult to separate the benefit for the university from the benefit for the students. One is as closely related to the other as science and education, or as the image of the university and the quality of teaching and other aspects of life in it. The aspect of usefulness related to the reputation and prestige of the institution is, of course, also important. The ORF scholarship favorably distinguished the university from other universities in the region and the city, increasing the prestige of studying at ISU. The presence of the ORF program was a kind of "novelty" that was used during the admissions campaigns. All ISU faculties, which implemented the program, indicated this in their advertising brochures when conducting career guidance events.

Participation in the ORF program was also beneficial for the ISU divisions. Thanks to participation in the competition for ORF scholarships, faculties and institutes of the university began to actively cooperate with each other in order to unite the intellectual potential of students. A comprehensive program of interaction was developed between scholarship students from different faculties, which facilitated joint research work and the organization of meetings among students to exchange experiences and provide information about scientific events held by ORF. Interest in scientific work has increased among students, they have become more actively involved in the public life of the university and their departments.

This had a positive effect on the academic mobility of students, the implementation of their ambitious scientific plans, scientific and pedagogical career; increased the level of communication and self-confidence. Created conditions for strengthening their scientific and search identity in general, allowing them to successfully adapt in any conditions. Participation in scientific schools and conferences held by ORF - was the impetus for our own research activities and implementation. Participation in the program allowed to attract students to scientific faculty and university activities, the level of publications and research at the faculty significantly increased. In 2012, a small study was carried out at the university, which showed interesting results. For example, for one ISU

student engaged in scientific research, there were, on average, 0.15 reports at conferences of various levels, and for an ORF student, 1.4 reports; there were, on average, 0.12 articles per research student, and 1.9 articles per ORF student. At the same time, the level of presentation of the research results of ORF scholarship students has increased: most of the reports were made at international and all-Russian conferences, articles were published in international and centrally cited publications. [1, p.194].

Speaking about the development of skills that are important not only in the academic world related to participation in competitions (for example, the ability to present your research project), it is worth mentioning the material side of the issue: many students and graduates talk about the importance of the scholarship helping to fully concentrate on research interests and studies, and not look for a side job. In addition, this scholarship has helped students study for commercial graduate and postgraduate studies (not everyone can pay for their studies on their own).

Participation in any scientific events for a young researcher and not only is always a fundamental thing in the formation of professional contacts for many years to come, and of course, participation in the schools of the Foundation is no exception. All former Fellows certainly celebrate this moment in the professional circle of ORF events. ISU Fellows have actively participated in almost all schools and conferences held under the auspices of ORF, and noted their absolute usefulness.

The participation of students in the work of schools was an important factor in the additional training of a humanities student. In addition, the student needed to prove himself at the stage of forming the composition of the school's participants: to submit an interesting essay application. Then, having become a participant in the school, the student could fully use the presented opportunity to expand knowledge and horizons within the framework of the problem under discussion. The schools were held at a high scientific, methodological and methodical level, within the framework of an extremely busy schedule. Students were busy from morning till evening, listening to lectures, taking part in the work of sections, master classes, trainings, where the participants were given the opportunity not only to discuss specific topics, but also to try themselves in practical activities. In addition to the formal part, school participants received an abundance of informal communication with their colleagues - teachers and students. As a result, students acquired knowledge concerning new directions of scientific research. Schools often became an impetus for choosing a new topic for scientific research [1, p. 195].

In turn, the Irkutsk University conducted several schools and master classes. Among them, the Baikal School - 2012 "Social Fact and Its Interpretation in Research and Scientific Text", the Baikal School - 2013 "Social Research: from the Field to the Presentation of Results", The First, Second and Third School for Young Authors for Participants of the Oxford Russia Scholarship

Program Fund, held in 2016 and 2018. The teachers of the School for Young Authors were S.A. Panarin. - Candidate of Historical Sciences, Head of the Center for Research on General Problems of the Modern East of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), founder of the project School of a young author Dyatlov V.I. - Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Department of World History and International Relations of the Faculty of History of ISU, Grigorichev K.V., Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Professor of the Department of Political Science, History and Regional Studies, Vice-Rector for Research and International Affairs of the ISU, Tashlykova M.B. - Candidate of Philology, Director of the Institute of Philology, Foreign Languages and Media Communication ISU. Students, participants of these schools, noted their usefulness, the fellows taught a lot, which helped them write and draw up their final qualifying works, promoted publication activity. In 2018, a series of master classes was also held for students of humanitarian specialties of Irkutsk State University "Methods and Sources of" Understanding Research".

The ORF Fellow is a special social group of students within departments. A kind of scientific elite who have realized their ideas through active involvement in the work of various projects of the Foundation. On the one hand, it can be said unequivocally that the most ambitious and motivated students have always become participants in the ORF scholarship program, so even a loss was perceived by many as an incentive for further development. There are quite a few examples of how students who did not receive an ORF scholarship in the end applied for Master's degree programs in Great Britain, China, Japan, Germany and eventually achieved what they wanted. Therefore, it is difficult to say unequivocally to what extent achievements related to studying at the university, or success in a future career, are related precisely to receiving an ORF scholarship. But at the very least, these are clearly interrelated things. Over the years of the ORF program at ISU, perhaps the most striking examples of success are associated with the continuation of an academic career, both at Irkutsk University and at other universities in Russia and abroad.

ISU graduates, participants in the ORF scholarship program, successfully continue their career as a researcher, adding to the scientific and pedagogical staff of the university. Here are just some examples: K.V. Ivanov defended his candidate thesis in 2014, currently is an assistant professor at the ISU Department of World History and International Relations, head of the ISU Research Unit and head of the ISU Center for Korean Studies. After graduating from the university, they defended their Ph.D. thesis and work at the departments of the university S.A. Sebekin (Department of Political Science, History and Regional Studies), A.A. Kruzhalina (Department of Russian History), A.A. Racheva (Department of Russian and General Linguistics), E.S. Kuzmina, M.N. Chuvashova (Department of State and Municipal Administration); A.S. Romanova, Yu.K.

Korshunova, E. D. Makritskaya (Law Institute), A.N. Pruzhinin (Institute of Social Sciences), I.A. Anisova, U.E. Chekmez (Institute of Philology, Foreign Languages and Media Communication).

The undoubted advantage of the Foundation's activities is its focus on regional universities. Talented guys who remained to receive higher education in their regions got the opportunity to study science at least partially on an equal footing with their metropolitan colleagues, and sometimes even stay in regional universities in order to continue to study science there at a decent, not provincial or local level. after graduation. Participation in the competition on equal terms with students from other partner universities showed a fairly high level of training of students of Irkutsk University.

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