

A time of change and further opportunity



The last 12 months has been one of significant change in the Higher Education sector with the announcement of a major overhaul in the funding of undergraduate education. At the University of Birmingham, we are committed to ensuring that students who join us have the best possible student experience, and that all those who have the potential to benefit from it should be able to do so, regardless of family and financial background.

We are making significant investment in both the facilities and the services to support students once they join us. Our state-of-the-art Bramall concert hall and Music department will open in 2012; we have plans to invest in new world-class sports facilities and the development of a new central library building for our extensive collections.

Alongside investments in our estate we are making substantial investments in enhanced financial support for students from lower income backgrounds as well as increasing our outreach activities to promote fair access. Our progressive and targeted financial aid package will offer support to over 4,000 students and will increase our investment

in widening access to over £12 million by 2015–6. For the most financially disadvantaged students with family incomes below £16,190 our support package would alleviate the primary upfront costs of higher education: accommodation and fees by offering a £4,750 award equivalent to the average annual cost of our catered halls of residence, or alternatively a partial fee waiver of up to £3000. There will be tapered financial support for students with family incomes between £16,190 and £42,000.

It is important that students who join us through our flagship Access to Birmingham (A2B) programme, or from backgrounds where access to contacts in the professions and graduate jobs is limited, are supported in developing the skills, networks and experiences needed for future employment alongside their degrees. We are investing £3.5 million in sector-leading employability services which will provide Birmingham students with access to mentoring by some of the University's most successful alumni, internships in the UK and overseas and specialist staff offering unique careers guidance tailored to each academic subject area: ensuring that Birmingham graduates continue to succeed after university.

During 2010–11, the Outreach team worked with a large number of schools and staff to provide higher education experiences for local learners including masterclasses, residential experiences, tailored school visits, mentoring by our undergraduates and talks in schools. It is important that during the next academic year we continue to work together to ensure that students have the right information and advice about the opportunities available to them and the financial aid to support those future decisions. Inside this edition of *Outreach Review* you can discover some of the activities which took place last year, the success of some of your previous students and find information on activities for your students for this year.

Once again we look forward to working with you all in the forthcoming year. At a time of unprecedented change in the educational sector it is important that we continue to put our students at the centre of all that we do and provide them with opportunities to help them progress.

Gail Rothnie
Head of Outreach

Access to Birmingham

Boost in entrants to the University through Access to Birmingham (A2B)

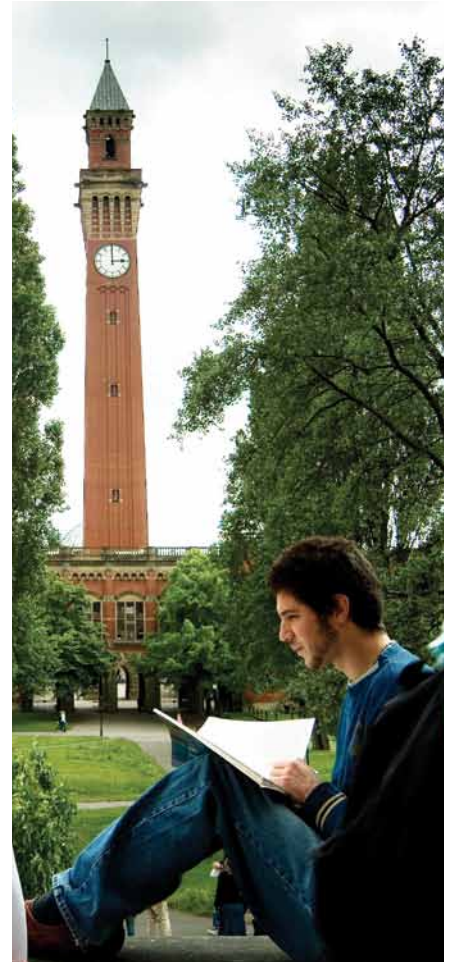
We are delighted that the number of entrants to the University through the A2B scheme has risen again this year. At Welcome Week we saw 236 A2B students arriving to start their degree programmes and 97 of these qualified for the A2B scholarship, awarded to those who pass the A2B module and get the standard entry grades for their course. With the entry grades needed to get into university continuing to rise with the competition for places, the alternative offer which forms part of the A2B scheme is more important than ever.

To ensure that the A2B support gets to the students who need it most, we have made a few changes to our eligibility criteria this year. To see the updated criteria and to obtain a copy of the application form, please see www.birmingham.ac.uk/a2b

We are pleased that our analysis of students' performance once they enter the University shows that their progression and degree outcomes are comparable to students who come via the non-A2B route. Please see our other articles indicating the support we are providing to help students develop the skills and experiences to access graduate level employment once they leave us.

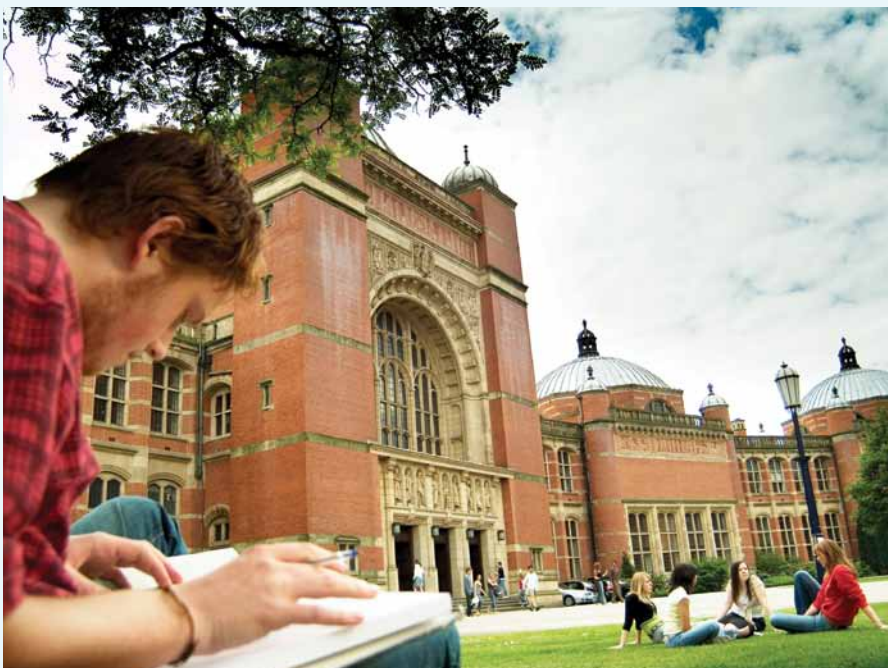
We are a key partner in a national pilot scheme for Year 12 students called Realising Opportunities which involves working in partnership with a number of other leading universities.

With so many policy changes happening recently, we have undertaken a review of the A2B scheme which included research in several of our partner schools and colleges. Thank you to all the participants who found time to give their opinions about A2B. We will be acting on as many suggestions as possible. One outcome of the research was a proposal to set up an annual teachers' forum with key A2B partners in order to guide the development of the scheme and improve dialogue between teachers and the University. If you are interested in receiving an invitation to this forum or have any other questions about A2B contact Anne Snell on 0121 414 7801 or email a.m.snell@bham.ac.uk



Supporting students into future graduate employment

As fees and competition in the job market increase, graduate employability continues to dominate discussions around higher education. As a group, A2B students are under-represented in graduate entry jobs as they frequently cannot afford to take advantage of unpaid work opportunities, or opportunities far from home, and often lack the social networks necessary to open doors into professions. At Birmingham we recognise that A2B students many benefit from enhanced support once they join us and we are consequently offering a new Gateway Internship that will offer funding for A2B students to undertake relevant summer work experience. This will see more of our talented students being able to experience commercial environments, develop professional and transferable work skills, work with alumni and build a competitive advantage in their graduate job search and career planning.





**Eiranpreet (3rd year BSc Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence)
(previously of Wood Green High School)**

'The A2B scheme has been one of the biggest contributors to my success to date; it has provided me with contacts, experiences and most of all motivation to achieve the best.

I am currently on a placement year with UBS investment bank and wealth management in London, working alongside the global technology team. The A2B scheme has enabled me to secure this

life-changing placement by introducing me to many different people who have helped me develop the essential skills needed to work in such a large organisation. The internship experience will be invaluable to my future career prospects and the scholarship funding has allowed me to settle into my new flat in London and get a head start to a new lifestyle that might otherwise have been impossible.'

Kimberley (LLB Law, 2010), A2B Scholarship recipient (previously of John Wilmott School)

'My A2B Scholarship helped ensure I could pursue my ambition and career as a lawyer. Receiving financial support while I was studying for my Law degree definitely made me feel less pressurised. It also meant I was in a position to pay off the large amount of money required to undertake my postgraduate training.

'I took part in the A2B scheme during my final year at school and completed an online study skills programme, a piece of academic work and a student shadowing experience. My involvement in the scheme meant I received an offer based on slightly lower A level grades and I was awarded the scholarship because I achieved the standard grades required.

'Coming to Birmingham was special to me because I am the first generation of my family to attend university. After attaining a 2:1 degree and graduating in July 2010, I passed the Legal Practice Course (LPC) with a distinction. I started working as a trainee solicitor at Coley and Tilley in Birmingham this year and I'll qualify as a solicitor in 2013.

'I think studying at Birmingham made me stand out from other applicants due to the University's status and prestige. Thank you so much for the scholarship. It had a profound impact on both my University life and my career afterwards and I hope one day I will be able to sponsor a student myself.'

A2B Students move onto employment...

We are delighted that students who joined us through our A2B scheme are going on to pursue exciting graduate careers.



Jonathan, Physiotherapy graduate with first class honours (previously of Archbishop Illsley School)

'As a result of visiting the sports facilities on campus at Birmingham as a child, it was my early ambition to study at university. As neither of my parents had experience of university, a teacher supported my application to the University through the A2B scheme. I successfully received a place on my chosen physiotherapy course with an alternative A2B offer.

'After a lot of hard work I managed to exceed my offer and achieved AAB grades that enabled me to win the A2B scholarship. My parents were so proud when I was accepted by such a high ranking university with a scholarship.

'While at university my father was made redundant after working in the same factory for 22 years so it was really important for me to support myself without relying on my parents. The A2B scholarship really helped and having fewer money worries, I was able to focus on my studies and got a first class honours degree and won the prize for dissertation of the year.'

Since graduating Jonathan has recently returned from travelling in Australia and is now enjoying work as a physiotherapist in a private clinic. His future ambitions include studying for a PhD and becoming a lecturer in Physiotherapy.

Forward Thinking

In December 2010 we welcomed the first Forward Thinking cohort of students to the University for their final event on this progressive programme. Back in October 2007, the 45 students from nine schools in the Oaks collegiate visited the University for the first time. They were then in Year 8 and were introduced to the idea of higher education, looked around the campus, and made towers from spaghetti and marshmallows! Three years on and they were coming to the end of Year 11, about to sit their GCSE exams and looking a lot more grown up (and taller!) than they had in 2007.

During the programme the students had visited the University on a number of occasions, had the opportunity to visit another university, and worked with a University student mentor. At the final event a motivational speaker gave the students some positive thinking tips for their final exams, and we were later joined by parents for the presentation of certificates. It was a fantastic evening and a great moment for us as the first cohort reached the end of the programme. The programme has developed based on feedback from the students and their teachers – Forward Thinking didn't even have a name when they first joined! Since 2007 two more groups of schools have become involved in the programme and there are now over 400 Forward Thinking students in Years 8–11.

The programme aims to motivate students to maximise their potential and attainment at school by introducing them to the idea of higher education and working with them to help them make informed decisions about their future choices.



Graduating from the Academic Enrichment Programme

The University of Birmingham's successful Academic Enrichment Programme – which aims to raise the aspirations of students from less advantaged backgrounds – has just seen the fifth cohort of Year 12 students finish the residential phase of the Programme. 2011 also witnessed students from the first year of the Programme become graduates themselves from the University.

Stephanie Freeman was part of the first cohort of students in 2008 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Birmingham.

'This is one of the happiest days of my life. I never thought that I would ever be a graduate and the support I received on the Academic Enrichment Programme (AEP) made me realise that I had the potential to aspire to a Russell Group university.' She continues: 'My parents are here and they love all the pomp and ceremony that goes with becoming a graduate of the University and my dad has been taking pictures all day!'

Stephanie was also a Student Ambassador for the University and supported students on the AEP when she was an undergraduate herself. 'It was important for me to help students on the Programme and offer them the same level of support and guidance I received when I was on the AEP. It was so good to see students as undergraduates at the University who I had mentored on the Programme and for them to still recognise me and become ambassadors themselves.'

The AEP has now seen almost 100 students from the Programme become undergraduates and graduates of the University of Birmingham. The 2011 Programme saw 108 students participate from over 50 different schools and colleges across the greater West Midlands region. The 2012 Programme is already being organised and information will be sent to schools and colleges in early 2012.

For more information, please check the University website or contact Mohammed Ansar on 0121 414 7169 or email m.ansar@bham.ac.uk



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Music for the future

As part of the University's mission to provide the best possible facilities for its undergraduates, the new Bramall Music Building is nearing completion and will be open in 2012.

To mark the new building, a time capsule was buried during the Community Open Day in June 2011 and pupils in local schools were invited to get creative and think about what a musical instrument would look like in the year 2061, when the time capsule would be dug up. Over 50 entries were received from primary and secondary school students aged between 5–18 years of age, and were displayed during the Community Open Day before being judged by Professor David Eastwood, Vice-Chancellor of the University.

Musical instruments which involved iPads and electronic pianos were just a few of the designs submitted for consideration by primary school students. The two winning entries were chosen for their creativity, eco-friendliness and design work and were submitted by students at Hallfield School and Colmers Farm Primary School.

Kian from Hallfield School designed a very fetching musical outfit and Amy from Colmers Primary School designed some futuristic musical gloves.

The winning students and their parents were invited onto campus during the Community Open Day to be presented with prizes for them and a trophy for the school. The students then helped the Vice-Chancellor to bury the time-capsule, accompanied by a large crowd who watched the ceremony while listening to a piece of music that was especially composed for the event by one of the University's own Music undergraduates.

The schools will also be invited for a bespoke tour of the Bramall Music Building when it opens in 2012 and hopefully we will see all the winning entrants return to the University in 50 years' time to see their entries being dug up in the Year 2061.

The winning entry from secondary schools was sent in by Edward Pierre Gomez, a Year 13 student from Walsall Academy, who wrote and recorded a rap about the importance of education. We are delighted that Edward has now begun a Physics degree at the University.





Aimhigher... a new beginning



The introduction of tuition fees in the early 2000s was accompanied by the formation of Aimhigher, a government-funded initiative to bring schools, colleges and universities together to plan and provide a coherent, national programme of aspiration and attainment raising activities, delivered by 42 local partnerships across England. At the University of Birmingham we have been very proud to be the lead institution for the Birmingham and Solihull partnership and our local evaluations have demonstrated the impact the work has had for students in the region. Indeed, during its period of operation the proportion of young people progressing to higher education from our poorest communities increased substantially, despite the introduction of fees¹. However, in 2010 the Coalition government announced the end of national funding for Aimhigher, and the programme closed in July 2011.

Strength in numbers

Faced with the loss of national funding, local universities were quick to realise the need to sustain the good practice, collaborative benefits and strategically important relationships previously engendered via national funding, and over the last few months have worked with partner schools and colleges to form a new, locally funded Aimhigher partnership.

The new Aimhigher is led by four of Birmingham's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

- The University of Birmingham
- Aston University
- Birmingham City University
- University College Birmingham

In 2011–2012 the four universities have committed funding, resources and staff time to provide a programme of outreach activity available to schools and colleges. They have also agreed collaborative targets in their respective Access Agreements. The value placed on the wide range of activity delivered to thousands of learners over recent years has meant that schools and colleges have been keen to be part of the new partnership. To date, over 50 schools and colleges have joined the partnership and will pay modest subscriptions to access the heavily subsidised activities on offer. Many intend to use the new Pupil Premium funding, targeted at young people in receipt of Free School Meals, to support their involvement in the programme. The progress we are making locally on this agenda is leading edge, and not to be found in all areas of the country. It is a demonstration of our previous success as a partnership, and also our commitment to be united in our Aimhigher desire to ensure that young people from less advantaged communities become motivated and confident about their learning and progression, make informed decisions and have opportunities to explore the world of higher education and what it might mean for them.

Not just young people

Recent changes in legislation mean that schools and colleges will in future be directly responsible for the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance. As Connexions services face significant cuts, staff in schools and colleges will play an increasingly critical role in supporting young people on their journey towards training, employment or higher education.

The Aimhigher Partnership will help meet this challenge, and in addition to providing key operational updates for subscribers, will also include more general sessions on new and emerging developments and good practice in higher education progression support and guidance, with inputs from other agencies such as UCAS and Student Finance England.

Learn more

Mike Thompson, Aimhigher Co-ordination
e: m.a.thompson@bham.ac.uk
t: 0121 415 8176
www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk

¹Trends in young participation in higher education: core results for England, HEFCE, January 2010

Meet our Aimhigher Associate of the Year!

We were very pleased that this year, one of our undergraduates, Elly Mitchell, was awarded Aimhigher Associate of the Year for the Birmingham and Solihull partnership!



'I found the experience to be extremely rewarding, being able to build a rapport with the students and see the confidence in themselves and their own abilities develop gave me a great sense of achievement.'

students to reach their full potential and continue on to higher education. In order to do this I was allocated six students which I saw on a one-to-one basis every week for 15 weeks. Throughout the sessions I covered topics such as time and stress management, budgeting, looking at the UCAS application process, personal statements and student finance, all of which allowed the students to make independent and informed decisions on whether to progress on to higher education. I found that the best way to effectively convey the topics was to share my own experiences which the students always responded well to. It was in sessions like these that individual characteristics began to shine and the differences between each of my students shone through. This allowed me, over the weeks, to tailor my sessions to the individual students, to ensure that each one was gaining as much as possible from our meetings.

'Overall, I found the experience to be extremely rewarding, being able to build a rapport with the students and see the confidence in themselves and their own abilities develop gave me a great sense of

achievement. I also saw an improvement in my own confidence, not only working with the students but also in communicating with staff which allowed me to become part of the team within the college. I believe the success of my placement was due to the overwhelming support I received from all members of staff which immediately put me at ease, allowing me to develop my own skills along with the students as staff always made time to address any issues or concerns. On reflection I found the experience to be a good grounding for future development as it has given me a great insight into the dynamics of a successful team and working with young people; something I will be able to carry forward on to future endeavours.'

The Sixth Form College, Solihull says of Elly: 'It has been a pleasure to work with Elly and even more of a pleasure to see the positive impact Elly's support has had on the students she has engaged with. Her enthusiasm, motivation and dedication have been a great asset to the College and many students have benefitted from it.'

The University of Birmingham has been a key partner in the nationally-funded Aimhigher Associate programme, and following cessation of government funding we will be continuing to work with our higher education partners – Birmingham City University, Aston and University College Birmingham – and schools to enable undergraduate mentors to continue to support pupils in Birmingham and Solihull.

Elly told us a bit about her experiences as an Aimhigher Associate.

'I originally signed up to the Aimhigher Associate scheme after spending a summer working as a cabin counsellor at an American summer camp which I thoroughly enjoyed and thought that the scheme would be an ideal way to continue on a similar path. I was also aware that the experience would be beneficial to a potential career path in social work.

'My placement was at The Sixth Form College, Solihull, encouraging AS level



Forthcoming events 2011–2012



RAISE (Raising Aspirations in Secondary Education) Programme

A range of fun, interactive lectures, workshops and competitive subject based events for Years 7–11. They are designed to support students' motivation and commitment to secondary education and in the long term support achievement raising at GCSE.

Learn more
Contact: Mohammed Ansar,
m.ansar@bham.ac.uk for more information.

Year 7	Christmas Science Lecture	12–13 December 2012
Year 8	Sunshine Lecture	20 June 2012
Year 9	Physics Big Quiz	25 Jan 2012
Year 9–10	History Quest	27 March 2012
Year 10	Biology Big Quiz	19 March 2012
Year 10	Birmingham Science Festival	28 March 2012
Year 12	Success or Failure Conference	16 Nov 2011



Residential activity

Year 10	Uni Experience Unifest	July 2012
Year 10	Health and Life Sciences Unifest	July 2012
Year 12	Academic Enrichment Programme	20–24 August 2012

Tailored school visits

We organise tailored school visits for groups of up to 50 targeted students, please contact Kathy Buckley on 0121 414 7693 or email k.buckley@bham.ac.uk if you want to organise a visit for your school.

Masterclass Programme

Our Masterclasses are designed to stimulate enquiry and broaden knowledge of the subject area covered.

We run over 50 sessions per year; some relate closely to the school curriculum; others are broader and introduce new topics found in higher education study. It will give your students the opportunity to take part in a learning experience within a higher education setting. To book a place and find out more visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/advice/west-midlands-schools/Masterclasses.aspx



For more information on all of the services and activities we can provide for schools and colleges in the West Midlands area, please visit www.undergraduate.bham.ac.uk/teacherscareers/schoolswestmids.shtml