

# MA Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon and the Cultural History of Renaissance England



This exciting interdisciplinary MA invites you to understand Shakespeare's works in the context of the social and cultural history of the period. The programme is taught by fellows at the [Shakespeare Institute \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx\)](#) and members of the Department of History, whose areas of expertise include art and material culture, local history, court politics, gentry culture, reformation studies and popular belief to textual criticism, the business of playwriting and early modern drama. The programme includes palaeography skills training, with access to original documents reflecting life in early modern Stratford-upon-Avon.

[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham has been awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx\)](#)

## Course fact file

**Type of Course:** Taught

**Study Options:** Full time, part time

**Duration:** 12 months full-time, 24 months part-time

**Start date:** September

## Contact

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[School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies \(/schools/edacs/index.aspx\)](#)

[Shakespeare Institute \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx\)](#)

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## Details

You will study three core modules:

- Social and Cultural History of Renaissance England A
- Social and Cultural History of Renaissance England B
- Materials and Critical Methods for Research.

You will also study two further modules, choosing from:

- Plays and Poems A
- Plays and Poems B
- Shakespeare, Playwright and his Drama A
- Shakespeare, Playwright and his Drama B

(Full module descriptions available below)

Assessment is based on four 4,000-word essays submitted during the first two semesters and four Research Skills exercises.

The second component of the programme is a 15,000-word dissertation on an agreed topic which may relate to any aspect of the historical or literary culture of the period. This will give you the chance to follow up topics which have particularly interested you, and should you wish to, you will have the opportunity to use the original documents held at the Birthplace Trust Archive. You will be assigned an appropriate supervisor and will have regular meetings to discuss the progress of your research and draft chapters.

You will also attend the Shakespeare Seminars held once a week during term-time at the Shakespeare Institute and the Early Modern Culture, Literature and Society

Seminars held fortnightly in term time at the main Edgbaston campus. Both seminar series' feature papers presented by a range of established visiting scholars as well as Birmingham staff and students.

## Visiting the Shakespeare Institute

We welcome prospective students to visit the Shakespeare Institute. We usually arrange open afternoons to coincide with two of our [weekly Thursday seminar series \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/events/seminars.aspx\)](#) a term which gives you a good opportunity to experience the Shakespeare Institute and to meet our staff and students. If you would like to visit us at another time, please contact us.

- [Watch our videos about the Shakespeare Institute, our specialist library and student life in Stratford-upon-Avon \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/videos.aspx\)](#).

## Modules

You will study the following core modules:

### Social and Cultural History of Renaissance England A and B

These two modules give an introduction to the social and cultural history of the period, and focus specifically on issues relevant to Shakespeare's own life and drama. The subjects you will study include women's reputation, notions of honour and gentility, popular religious belief, material culture and witchcraft. We give particular emphasis to the ways in which these themes connect with life in Warwickshire and London, and the course often includes a field trip to study early modern houses or collections in the local area. The teaching for this course is provided by members of staff from the Department of History in the [Centre of Reformation and Early Modern Studies \(http://www.crems.bham.ac.uk/\)](#).

### Materials and Critical Methods for Research

You will be given essential training in research skills relating to the study of Shakespeare and local history, focusing on archival material relating to Stratford-upon-Avon. This module includes training in methods and materials for research on Shakespeare, covering topics such as Shakespeare bibliography and criticism, and instruction in palaeography (reading early modern handwriting) and the use of a wide variety of types of early modern document relating to Stratford upon Avon. You have the chance to work with original documents for this section of the course, some of which have connections with Shakespeare and his family. The first part is taught by the fellows of the Shakespeare Institute, the second by the staff of the [Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office \(http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/21/21/\)](#), including [Dr Robert Bearman \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/shakespeare/bearman-robert.aspx\)](#), who works on the local history of Warwickshire and Stratford in the early modern period, and Mairi MacDonald, an expert in Elizabethan palaeography.

You will also study two optional modules, choosing from:

### Shakespeare, the Playwright and his Drama A and B

Shakespeare's life and career are examined as a case study in the position of professional playwrights in early modern England. You will examine the way the theatre for which Shakespeare was writing worked - how plays were written, how play texts were circulated and the impact censorship had upon them. You will then be able to consider the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and the issues affecting his society, and to analyse the intervention the plays made in important social debates. These two modules can be studied individually or together.

### Plays and Poems A

This module encourages you to engage with most of Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories and Poems. Each class will cover a topic relating to one or more texts, using individual student input, and group discussion and analysis. This module can be studied as a standalone module or with Play and Poems B.

### Plays and Poems B

This module encourages you to engage with most of Shakespeare's Problem Plays, Tragedies and Late Plays. Each class will cover a topic relating to one or more texts, using individual student input, and group discussion and analysis. This module can only be studied with Plays and Poems A.

*Please note that availability of optional modules may vary from year to year.*

## Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2015/16 are as follows:

- Home / EU: £6,480 full-time, £3,240 part-time
- Overseas: £14,140 full-time

For part-time students, the above fee quoted is for year one only and tuition fees will also be payable in year two of your programme.

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments. Learn more about [postgraduate tuition fees and funding \(/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx\)](#).

Eligibility for Home/EU or Overseas fees can be verified with Admissions. Learn more about [fees for international students \(/International/students/finance/fees.aspx\)](#).

## Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's [Postgraduate Funding Database \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx\)](#).

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

## Entry requirements

In addition to the usual supporting documents, when you apply for this course we ask you to submit an example of your written work; this will preferably be an essay on Shakespeare, of about 2,000 words. If you do not have a piece of work that is of the right length it is better to send something that is longer rather than shorter so that we have a better chance to assess your critical writing on a literary topic.

Learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx\)](#)

## International students

### Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our [country pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx\)](#) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

## English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx>) to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx>)

## How to apply

### Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us** (<https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate>) to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

### Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx>)

**Apply now** (<https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo70.htm>)

## Learning and teaching



Teaching time involves two two-hour seminars per week for all students, taken on consecutive days. Those undertaking the programme over one year will be expected to attend an additional two-hour seminar on Research Skills in the first semester. Part-time students attend this module in their second year.

The Research Skills and Shakespeare, Playwright and his Drama modules are taught at **The Shakespeare Institute** in Stratford-upon-Avon, but the Social and Cultural History module is taught in the **History Department** at The University of Birmingham. Therefore one day a week is spent on campus in Birmingham.

The programme allows access to the unique Shakespearian resources of the **Shakespeare Institute Library** (<http://www.shakespeare.bham.ac.uk/research/collections.shtml>), the Library of the Shakespeare Centre that curates the archives of the RSC, and the

**Royal Shakespeare Company** (<http://www.rsc.org.uk/home/default.aspx>). Study materials for this programme are enhanced by the close ties that the Shakespeare Institute has with the **Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** (<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk>), the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the archives associated with both of these institutions.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

### Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx>) which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx>).

## Related research

- **Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies** (</research/activity/crems/index.aspx>)

## Related staff

**Dr Robert Bearman** (</staff/profiles/shakespeare/bearman-robert.aspx>)

**Dr Tara Hamling** (</staff/profiles/history/hamling-tara.aspx>)

## Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

Postgraduates at the Shakespeare Institute are able to develop a broad range of creative, research and theatre skills, as well as in-depth subject knowledge.

In 2013, 99% of our postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation.

In recent years, our postgraduates have successfully entered a variety of sectors from teaching in secondary and higher education to performing arts, publishing, museums and library and archive work. Employers that graduates have gone on to work for include: Imperial College London; National Trust; Royal Shakespeare Company; Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; The Grove Theatre; and University of Bristol.