

Shakespeare today and the student experience

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Subsidies from the School of EDACS enabled us to repeat the success of last year's trip to bring a group of 80 undergraduate English students to the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon for a half days visit in October. We had received extremely positive student feedback on last year's event with the academic highlight identified as the workshop session with Dr Jaq Bessell's Performance Research Group of professional and PG student actors. Support from the Annual Giving Fund has fortunately allowed us to include this element in the programme for a second time to enrich the programme of events. Again the student feedback reported that 'the *Macbeth* workshop had been great' and 'the highlight of the academic programme' for them, see comments below.

It is very important to us that the undergraduate students are given the opportunity to take full advantage of the University of Birmingham's foothold in Stratford-upon-Avon and we therefore hope that this trip will become an annual event. It has also raised awareness of how such initiatives enhance the student teaching experience in order that similar trips are now being planned for students in other cohorts. This will have positive benefits for recruitment, with students confirming on the activity evaluation questionnaires that the day had 'definitely interested them in postgraduate study'.

One student said that 'the *Macbeth* workshop was entertaining and enjoyable', another 'the *Macbeth* actors-brilliant!' and another 'the *Macbeth* workshop was excellent'. A further student said 'that they couldn't have asked for more-it was fantastic!' Students explained that 'the workshop highlighted the element of performance and how varying interpretations can alter the text'. To summarise, one student made a special effort to email the lecturer to say 'I just wanted to say a thank you for organising the Shakespeare trip to Stratford last week. I had a fantastic day and it will definitely help with studying our module-I haven't heard anyone say a bad thing about the whole day out, so it was obviously a huge success!'