

Classics and Ancient History alumni profiles

Joanna Johnson, BA Classics (1995), MPhil Classics (1997)

Joanna is the head of Classics at Solihull School.

"Having completed my studies in Classics I started my PGCE at King's College, London in September 1999. It was hard work – up early in the morning to travel right across London to get to my school placements – but I really enjoyed it – it was a worthwhile course and it taught me so much about how to become a good teacher.

My first teaching position was at Derby Grammar School, a small independent boys' school. Here I discovered the magic art of classroom management and went on my first residential trip – to Hadrian's Wall. After three years I moved onto Solihull School, a large co-educational day school, and haven't looked back since. After a couple of years I became Head of Classics, which involves managing people and budgets, organising exam entries and, of course, teaching Classics.

While at Solihull School I have been able to get involved in a massive range of activities - trips to Hadrian's Wall, Snowdonia, Rome and the Bay of Naples, France, Greece, Tunisia, Germany, Austria, and even New York, Chicago, San Diego and Washington (not all of them Classics trips!); I've stage-managed, choreographed and produced musicals; I've worked with the Sixth Form in a variety of roles, mentoring pupils through the UCAS process; I've had the opportunities to go places, see things and take part in activities that I would never otherwise had the chance to do – all this and teach a subject I really love!

I am lucky as I already have my dream job – and my Classics degree is vital to it. Teaching is a career that offers so much – every day is different, you get the chance to discover and develop your talents, and you are working with some of the most interesting people there are."

Vicky Jordan, BA Classical Literature and Civilisation (2010).

Vicky was awarded a first class degree in [Classical Literature and Civilisation \(/undergraduate/courses/caha/classical-lit-civ.aspx\)](#) and is now a trainee solicitor.

I am at the beginning of a career in law; about to start my training contract as a trainee solicitor with a National Law firm; having converted to law by completing the Graduate Diploma in law. I had considered a legal career from a young age; however, Classics was a subject that had always fascinated me. I chose to do Classics because it was what I wanted to study; not because I thought it had a clear career path at the end of it. And I loved the course and my time at the University of Birmingham.

The course provided such a rich variety of content; covering many different areas such as philosophy, literature, drama, history, and architecture all within the captivating cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. Not only was the content diverse; but so were the teaching styles and methods of assessment. The course's range in assessment type helped me build many skills which I was able to transfer to my study of law and to securing my Training Contract in a very competitive industry. The recruitment process in the legal profession is very competency focused, and my time with the Classics department gave me good examples of how to show I had developed competency skills; such as team working, presentation skills, independent thinking and critical analysis.

It turned out that even though choosing the Classics degree was not completely career focused, it prepared me well for a career in law. I was told by one partner in a law firm, that there was a shift towards recruiting trainee solicitors who had done degrees other than law and then converted as this gave them a wider skills set.

In choosing a classics degree at the University of Birmingham, I have had three years studying a subject I loved and of which I have great memories (a particular highlight being the study tour in the second year). But I also got a degree that gave me solid foundations in the essential transferable skills; that enabled me to secure a lucrative training contract with a leading law firm.

Chris Naughton, BA Ancient History and Archaeology, 1999, and MPhil Egyptology, 2000

Chris completed his [BA in Ancient History and Archaeology \(/undergraduate/courses/caha/arch-ancient-hist.aspx\)](#) in 1999 before going on to complete an [MPhil in Egyptology \(/postgraduate/courses/combined/caha/egyptology.aspx\)](#) in 2000. He is currently working as the Director for The Egypt Exploration Society.

"My tutors, Anthony Leahy and Lisa Montagno Leahy, had recommended I join the Egypt Exploration Society and make use of their library while I was researching for my MPhil thesis. A few months after finishing, I got a job as Librarian and Membership Secretary at the EES, and have worked for the Society in a variety of roles ever since, now as Director. With help from Anthony, I also arranged to join a University of Pennsylvania dig in Abydos, Egypt, which the EES encouraged me to do, even though I had already started working for them by the time the dig came around, and this was the first of five seasons I spent in Egypt, all of which provided me with enormously useful experience. It goes without saying as well that Anthony and Lisa, and my two Birmingham degrees gave me a very sound grounding in Egyptology which has served me well ever since. I love working for an organisation that makes a real difference to public understanding of Egyptian history and archaeology, and that also has a rich (130 year) history of its own."

Adam Landsman, BA Archaeology, Ancient History and Anthropology, 2007

Adam graduated with a [BA in Archaeology, Ancient History and Anthropology \(/undergraduate/courses/caha/arch-ancient-hist.aspx\)](#). He is now a primary school teacher for a school in London.

"My first employers loved the diversity of my degree. After graduating from Birmingham I joined a primary school as a teaching assistant to get experience within a school before then applying and getting onto a GTP (Graduate Teacher Programme) course. I have been teaching for 3 years at my current school. I have always had a lot of creativity and have always had a strong passion for teaching so sharing knowledge with such inquisitive children is a dream for me."