Modern Languages alumni profiles

Dr Emily Oliver, English and German Studies PhD, 2013

Dr Emily Oliver graduated with a **PhD in English and German Studies (/postgraduate/courses/research/lang/german-studies.aspx)** in 2013. She is now working as a researcher at King's College London on a project investigating cultural life in the British and American occupied zones of post war Germany.

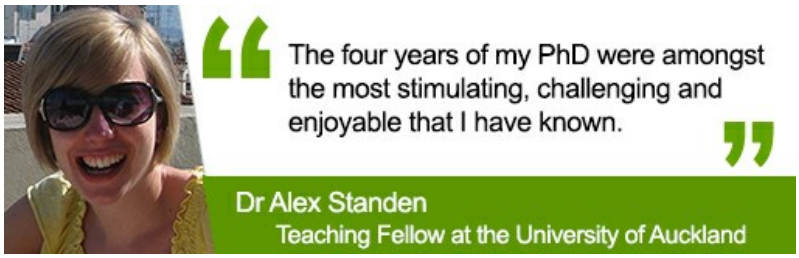
Emily says, "My PhD focused on productions of Shakespeare in East Germany during reunification. Although I was based at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, it was clear from the outset that this would be an interdisciplinary project with a supervisor in each department. My experience was a thoroughly positive one. My supervisor in the German Department, Dr Nicholas Martin, worked very closely with my other supervisor providing helpful guidance and support throughout my four years at Birmingham. My supervisors also kindly agreed to run a mock viva for me, so that I eventually went into the viva feeling confident and well-prepared."

"The University of Birmingham also gave me the opportunity of teaching on the undergraduate German module "Texts in Context" for two consecutive years, which enabled me to meet some of the other staff in the department. My colleagues were very friendly, helpful, and supportive, and I was impressed with the department's organisation and efficiency."

"During my PhD, the University of Birmingham hosted one of the annual DAAD German Studies Summer Schools - a three-day postgraduate conference, which proved both informative and fun. I got to meet other PhDs working in my area, and was also given the opportunity of chairing panels and generally helping out with the smooth running of the conference."

"Working as a researcher at King's College London is a job I could not have got without the strong interdisciplinary nature of my research fostered during my time at Birmingham!"

Dr Alex Standen, Italian Studies PhD, 2011



"My thesis examined contemporary author Dacia Maraini's political commitment through her engagement with the issue of gender violence.

"The four years of my **PhD (/postgraduate/courses/research/lang/italian-studies.aspx)** were amongst the most stimulating, challenging and enjoyable that I have known. Being part of a large and active postgraduate community was one of the key factors in my experience: family and friends warned me before I began that researching would be a solitary existence, but I found it quite the contrary. Birmingham offers a huge number of opportunities for its doctoral researchers, including teaching, training in research skills, joining reading groups, acting as postgraduate representatives and organising and attending conferences. I was also part of a group of students who helped design the new Research Skills module, where I felt that my opinions were really valued. I am now working as a teaching fellow at the University of Auckland, New Zealand; I am in no doubt that my time as a doctoral researcher at Birmingham both influenced my choice to continue working in academia and prepared me extremely well for all the challenges of my new role."

Noor Balfaqeeh, MA Translation Studies, 2009

Noor Balfaqeeh (**MA Translation Studies (/postgraduate/courses/taught/arts-law-inter/translation-studies.aspx)**) graduated in 2009 through open distance learning.

Noor took up the programme to improve her translation skills while working at a university in Saudi Arabia which teaches all its programs using English . In less than a year after earning the master degree, she was appointed the Manager of Communication and Public Relations Department of Effat University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

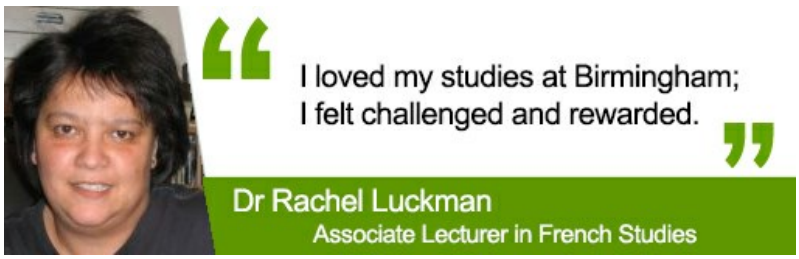
In spite of being a working mother with three children, Noor achieved a Masters' qualification with merit. She enjoyed the privilege of the wide range of online resources that are available on the BHAM E-Library. In addition, the program flexibility and the supervisors' supportive approach helped her continue doing her best.

She believes that her studies were a life experience that not only added to her academic growth but to her life long-learning skills.

"The best time I spent was collecting the data for my dissertation," Noor said. "I felt so proud when explaining the idea of my research and how my research may add to the translation movement in the country."

Noor appreciated the bank of assignments which bridges the gap with colleagues and professors on a distance learning course. "Reading how colleagues tackled the same paper assignment in different ways on a virtual discussion board helped to broaden our knowledge," Noor said.

Dr Rachel Luckman, French Studies PhD, 2009



Rachel graduated with a BA (Hons) degree in French Studies at The University of Birmingham in 2001, then went on to study an MPhil in 2003, a **PhD (/postgraduate/courses/research/lang/french-studies.aspx)** in 2009, and is now an Associate Lecturer in French Studies at the University.

"I loved my studies at Birmingham; I felt challenged and rewarded. Being a mature student, I had been worried about fitting in and making friends, but everyone at Birmingham was welcoming and encouraged me greatly. There was never any doubt in my mind that I wanted to go on to Postgraduate Study, and was lucky to get Professor Crossley (now an Emeritus Professor) as my supervisor. With his help, and the guidance of my mentor, Professor Birkett, I not only got a studentship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, but also got the Constance Naden Prize for my MPhil thesis. But I knew there was 'more' I needed to say, so went on to do a PhD on Flaubert and Proust, and in fact, received a national award, from the British Fellowship of Women Graduates, for my research. I began lecturing as a PG, and have continued on a part-time basis."

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