

Graduate profiles

Rachel Moriarty BA English Literature and Philosophy Account Executive

Rachel Moriarty graduated with a degree in English Literature and Philosophy in 2012. She has recently been made an account executive in the marketing department of customer insight firm Dunnhumby.

Rachel recalls "There was thoroughly engaging and interesting content on my modules and the lecturers were inspiring in both delivery of modules and in their academic reputation. Some modules provided experience of teamwork but I would say that the most useful preparation for my career was more subtle than that - that is, learning to be more articulate. This is an incredibly useful skill both in the working world and when applying for jobs. I learned to be articulate, concise, engaging and persuasive both in writing and when giving oral presentations of my work. This has been invaluable in applying for jobs."

"I would advise students to make the most of the vast opportunity for extracurricular activities while they are on campus. There is something for everyone and it is unlikely that you will have such a broad range of opportunities after graduation. Most of all, enjoy your academic study while you can. It is easy to lose sight of the intrinsic value and appeal of your degree when getting bogged down with stress and pressure about careers, but remember that you are (hopefully) studying for this degree because you enjoy it and are passionate about it. You have the rest of your life to earn a living: enjoy your studies now!"

Vanessa Lipman BA (Hons) Philosophy Human Resource Management Graduate Trainee

I graduated from the University of Birmingham with a first class honours degree in Philosophy. I currently work for Sainsbury's, in their central London office, having been selected onto their HR Graduate training scheme.

Whilst it had long been my ambition to pursue a career (either HR or Law), I chose to study a non-vocational undergraduate degree in Philosophy as I felt this would allow me to gain a broader range of abilities which would be useful in my working life, whilst developing my interest in the subject. I sought plenty of advice from Law and HR professionals, all of whom encouraged me to study something I was interested in, as vocational training can come later in life. I truly believe that having a degree in Philosophy from the University of Birmingham has given me a solid grounding for my career.

In my experience, Graduate Employers are often keen to hire people with Philosophy degrees, as the subject provides students with a hugely valuable transferrable skill set. In my current job, working in Organisational Development, I am already using the analytical, reasoning and literary skills I gained during my studies and am confident that they will continue to be useful as I progress in business. These skills will also enable me to meet the challenge of the part-time Masters in Management, which I am due to complete in 2010. Employers can train recruits on technical knowledge, but having the ability to write a clearly structured report or a well researched business case is where a Philosophy Graduate has a clear advantage in the workplace. My metaphysics dissertation certainly taught me that!

I thoroughly enjoyed my Philosophy degree at Birmingham and I would recommend it to anyone who wants a varied, challenging, academic and thought-provoking degree. During my studies I was exposed to such interesting ideas and had the opportunity to think, learn and discuss topics that I would never have otherwise considered. I feel that the degree encourages self-development since it enabled me to stretch my mind and take a far more considered approach to life. The faculty offers the highest quality teaching whilst providing great support for its students. I still miss studying philosophy and enjoy reading around the subject in my spare time.

Nicola Kennedy BA (Hons) Philosophy Trainee Chartered Accountant

I studied single honours Philosophy at Birmingham and am now training to become a Chartered accountant with a top 10 ranking Accountancy firm in England, where I am on a three year graduate programme. I work as an auditor, so I get to see a wide range of businesses and I'm in a different location most weeks which keeps things interesting.

My degree in Philosophy gave me many valuable life skills which have eased my transition into the work place. I feel able and competent in my job, a confidence I acquired during my time at university.

At the application stage, I used anecdotes and examples from lectures I had during my tenure at university, and I have no doubt that impressing my interviewers with my knowledge of philosophical issues helped me to get the job, as on some level, everyone has an interest in these things, as they relate to the world and to real issues.

The Philosophy Faculty at Birmingham University are quite young, and this gives a fresh and modern approach to the age old issues under discussion.

Philosophy is a fantastic degree subject as it is varied, interesting and useful for the future. I would recommend it to anyone.

Richard Ward BA Philosophy Senior Clerk in the House of Commons

I joined the House of Commons Service through the Civil Service Fast Stream in October 2007, three months after graduating from my Philosophy degree from Birmingham. During my time as a Fast Streamer in the House Service, I worked for a couple of departmental select committees, before spending a year promoting public engagement with Parliament with the Parliamentary Outreach Service. I returned to the Committee Office on promotion in May 2011, and took up my current post in the Table Office—dealing with Parliamentary questions and procedural advice to Members—in October 2011.

The earlier stages of the Fast Stream application process test verbal and numerical reasoning. If you can make your way through first year logic classes, then the verbal reasoning section will seem like a walk in the park. The later stages assess candidates across a range of 'core competencies', some of which are developed to a very high level during a Philosophy degree. The ability to come up with interesting ideas and express them clearly is valued highly, as is a talent for sifting through reams of waffle and getting straight to the central issue.

I think the time I spent at Birmingham is serving me well. The department expanded rapidly during the time I was there, and by my third year I was able to choose from a wide range of modules. It's quite a young department, and a lot of the members of staff are very 'philosophically active', which is really useful when you come to study the subjects that they're working on. Even though I'm not pursuing the subject in an academic setting, I do retain an interest.

Lorelei Matthias - BA English Literature and Philosophy Senior Copywriter, Beattie McGuinness Bungay



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David Wall BA Philosophy PhD Candidate at the Australian National University.

I had initially gone to Birmingham to study medicine but changed after about 15 months having found the most enjoyable part of that course to be the single ethics module we had to take in the first year. When I was there the Philosophy department was very small, with only 6 or 7 permanent faculty. Nonetheless I feel that I received a broad education, taking in areas of historical philosophy, analytic philosophy, like philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and meta-ethics, political philosophy, and some continental philosophy too. I graduated with a First in 2001 before doing an M.Litt. in St. Andrews between 2001 – 2002. Following that I studied for a PhD in Canberra, Australia at the ANU between 2003-2007 where I wrote a dissertation on the relation between desire and motivation. Currently I am both trying to continue this line of research, writing about the epistemology of desire, and about weakness of will, while also trying to find work either lecturing or doing research.

Two things in particular have stayed with me from my time in Birmingham. First, the quality and breadth of the philosophical education I received, as I mentioned above. Second, how helpful and generous with their time the lecturers were. I remember Greg McCulloch (who was head of the department at the time) giving over many office hours just to me and one other student, Richard Moore (now a postgrad at Warwick University). And whenever I am doing any philosophy of language I think of Darragh Byrne using examples from Swedish to illustrate the difference between object- and meta-languages. And I haven't forgotten that Iain Law still owes me a number of Kit Kats for answering questions in his lectures. I am grateful to have had the chance to begin my Philosophy career in such an encouraging environment

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