

Ayo Bakare, BA Social Policy



Current role

I am currently working as an International Officer at the University of York.

How has your career developed since graduating from the University of Birmingham?

The University of Birmingham and my Social Policy degree have been an integral reason for my career success to date. In year two of the course I was able to take a module called 'Social Policy in Practice' which involved finding a volunteering placement in a local organisation. I initially contacted the (then) Commission for Racial Equality (now known as the Equality and Human Rights Commission), who subsequently put me in touch with a local charity called Rights and Equality West Midlands. Having met with the Director, Dr Frank Reeves, I was offered a part time position which, after graduation, led to my first full time graduate level job. This job was created from a successful funding application which was written based on an issue I covered in my final year dissertation around Multiple Heritage young people and their place in society.

Following the success of this project, I worked for several other equalities based organisations on projects involving gender equality for women in science, engineering and technology, disadvantaged young people, and refugees and asylum seekers. My degree and interest in social inclusion equipped me to talk passionately at interviews and also have a good understanding of the issues facing minority groups in the project work I was undertaking.

Following these several years in the voluntary sector, I changed focus and got into the Higher Education sector as at the time this was more stable following the austerity measures that came into force in 2010 with the change in government. I worked for two years in alumni relations, encouraging graduates to 'give back' to current students and higher education through philanthropy. Following this experience, I decided to go for a job that had some global remit and am now an International Officer, travelling around Africa and South East Asia recruiting international students, and opening up opportunities for students to experience life in a new socio-economic and political environment.

Why did you choose Birmingham?

I wanted to go to a big, diverse and energetic city where I would meet people of all backgrounds. As Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK it was my natural choice, and proved less expensive and stressful than living in London. I was also impressed by the campus when I visited at open day, being so green and spacious.



"I loved the student life element. If you are a student who wishes to make the most of the University experience, then Birmingham is a great place as there are so many different things to get involved in! I joined the women's rugby team, a sport I had never tried before and ended up playing at Twickenham in my final year as we got to the BUSA finals in 2006. I have continued playing ever since and it's a great way to meet new people as you go from university into the real world. I also met a lot of people through the African Caribbean Society, they had lots of social events and I made friends for life through that student group."

How did you grow as a person by coming to University?

I developed my interests and knowledge massively by coming to University and studying Social Policy. I grew up in Bradford, one of the most diverse, yet socially deprived cities in the UK and as an ethnic minority of mixed race origin, I had experienced a feeling of difference, racism and social injustice from a young age. Formally studying modules around health inequalities, social inclusion, criminology and sociology I was able to broaden my knowledge and articulate societies challenges and look at solutions. This was highly rewarding and I met many inspirational people throughout the three years I was a student.

What did you think of the learning experience at the University?

The mixture of lectures, the wide variety of modules, the seminar groups and 1:1 sessions with my personal tutor were ideal, and supported my learning throughout the years. The access to the library and facilities on campus were great resources and by the end of my degree I felt specialised in the area of race and equality and fully equipped to start my first job at graduate level due to the practical (volunteering) element of the course.

What advice would you give other students considering studying social policy at Birmingham?

Choose modules that you are passionate about and interested in. Take every opportunity to network with professionals in your area of interest (e.g. voluntary sector, education, health) to improve chances of getting a job afterwards. Try and get involved in student societies to meet a wider range of people and broaden your outlook and networks – and have fun!