

American and Canadian Studies and English Literature BA



A Joint Honours degree programme involves the study of two subjects to Honours degree level. If you study a subject in a Joint Honours programme, you work at exactly the same level and to the same academic standard as students taking that subject in a Single Honours programme. Joint Honours students are simply required to choose fewer topics from the range of options available in each half of the programme.

Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham has been awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx>)

Course fact file

UCAS code: TQ7H

Duration: 3 Years

Places Available: 8

Applications in 2013: 92

Typical Offer: ABB (**More detailed entry requirements and the international qualifications accepted can be found in the course details (? OpenSection=EntryRequirements)**)

Start date: September

Contact

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[School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies \(/schools/edacs/index.aspx\)](/schools/edacs/index.aspx)

[Birmingham Seminar for Environmental Humanities \(/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/bisemeh/index.aspx\)](/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/bisemeh/index.aspx)

[Department of English Literature \(/schools/edacs/departments/english/index.aspx\)](/schools/edacs/departments/english/index.aspx)

[American and Canadian Studies Centre \(/research/activity/acs/index.aspx\)](/research/activity/acs/index.aspx)

Details

In this programme, you study half of your modules (60 credits) in American & Canadian Studies and half in English Literature (60 credits).

First year

ACS: You take three foundation courses:

- American History to 1890, which includes examination of social, political and cultural themes
- Literature up to 1890, which analyses literary, visual and film texts
- An introduction to Canadian Studies

For more detail on these modules in ACS see [additional information \(/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-first.aspx\)](/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-first.aspx)

English Literature: The first-year literature foundation modules introduce students to a range of kinds and periods of literature, using a lively variety of critical and theoretical approaches. Modules include:

- Literary Aesthetics after 1800 (20 credits) introduces some key notions of form, style and genre in literary texts written after 1800. You will study three major focal texts (or groups of shorter texts) of different genres, and will develop skills in the close analysis of passages and in discursive essay writing.
- Literary Aesthetics before 1800 (20 credits) introduces key notions of form, style and genre in texts written before 1800. You will study three major focal texts (or

groups of shorter texts) of different genres, for example, Malory, *Morte D'Arthur*, revenge tragedies of the 16th and 17th centuries; selected verse satire of the 18th century.

- The Critical Practice module (10+10 credits) focuses on key knowledge and skills central to critical practice in English Studies. You will be introduced to strategies for engaging with primary and secondary sources for literary study and methodologies in literary criticism. This module is closely related to Literary Aesthetics after 1800 and Literary Aesthetics before 1800.

Second year

ACS: You study history and culture from 1890 to the present and begin to develop your own interests, be these political, sociological, literary or multicultural, by selecting specialist options from a list that includes:

- The African-American Experience
- Musicals
- The CIA and International History
- Film-making practices (which can include some practical training)

For more detail on these modules in ACS see [additional information \(/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-final.aspx\)](#)

English Literature: In this year, you take modules that address topics in three major periods of English literature, and which are informed by theoretical as well as textual and historical approaches. You will study:

- *One* Option module in Medieval/Early Modern literature (20 credits) chosen from a list of options.
- *One* Option module in Modern literature (20 credits) chosen from a list of options. Examples might include Writing and the World in the Nineteenth Century or Victorian and Decadent Literature: The Modern, the Aesthetic, and the Gothic or Making it New: Modernism and Literary Innovation in the Early Twentieth Century or Literature in Britain Since 1945.
- *One* Transhistorical Literature Option (10 + 10 credits). Examples may include Satire or Colonial and Postcolonial Literature or Hacking the Book.

Third year

ACS: Your final year courses are drawn from a wide range of options including Anti-Americanism, a variety of options exploring cross-cultural themes in American and Canadian History, and including courses in Modern and Contemporary Literature and Film. At the very centre of your studies is a year long project, entitled The Extended Essay, which gives you a chance to develop your own interests in depth. The extended essay differs from other modules and poses a greater challenge, and greater opportunity for personal development and originality. University taught courses provide a syllabus and bibliography, and the assessment generally explores a major theme of the course, sometimes by further recommended reading, or examines comprehensive understanding. The extended essay has quite different objectives. The final year project is the pinnacle of undergraduate education and illustrates skills acquired through years of university study in research conceived and executed independently.

For more detail on these modules in ACS see [additional information \(/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-final.aspx\)](#)

English Literature: The final year is the culmination of your programme, in which you choose two from a number of special option modules, taught by experts in those specialisms, and also undertake a dissertation in which you demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the issues in literature that you have been studying over the last two years. You study:

- Literature Dissertation (10 + 10 credits). You will write a 5,000 word dissertation on a subject of your choice.
- *One choice from* Literature Options (all 20 credits; see below)
- *Either* Shakespeare: Works, Time and Impact (10+10 credits) This course, running through the whole of your final year, allows you the opportunity to think widely across all Shakespeare's texts in their historical, cultural and theatrical contexts; it is taught, in the main, by staff from the University's Shakespeare Institute, and students are encouraged to draw on the resources of the Shakespeare Institute Library.
- *Or a further* Literature Option (20 credits)

Literature Options available to final-year students have recently included: Ben Jonson; Chaucer: Pre-modern Writing and Post-modern Reading; Contemporary Irish Writing; Decadence and Aestheticism; English Reformed; ExtraOrdinary Bodies: Difference and Normalcy in Contemporary Literatures; Fantasy and Fandom; Gossip, Scandal, and Celebrity; Hardy and Wilde; Henry James; Literary Modernism; Literature and Politics in the 1930s; Literature, Sexuality, and the Body; Lyrical Ballads; Medieval Manuscripts; The Novels of Virginia Woolf; Paradise Lost: Text and Context; Viragos, Coquettes and Prudes; Voicing Women; Victoria's Secrets: Literature and Secrecy in the Nineteenth Century; The Works of T. S. Eliot; Utopia and its Discontents.

Not all third-year options run at all times: this information is offered for general guidance only. It may be necessary from time to time to vary timing, content and availability.

Why study this course

From the analysis of North American film to study of the workings of Washington, from examining the War on Terror to considering slavery and its legacy, from reading modern American literature to exploring the Musical, American and Canadian Studies (ACS) explores the politics and culture of the United States and Canada within the broad context of history, literature and society. At its core, the ACS programme revolves around the study of North American history and literature and then branches out to explore politics, culture and film. These elements combine to give you a rounded understanding of North American life.

- American and Canadian Studies finished in equal second place overall in the last national research assessment exercise.
- American and Canadian Studies was ranked 5th in the UK- Guardian League Tables 2013 and The Complete University Guide 2013.
- There are a wide range of established exchange partners in America and Canada for those spending their third year abroad including University of Alabama, University of British Columbia Vancouver, University of Toronto and University Ottawa.
- We also offer a limited number of student internships (a work placement) through a competitive application process. These give students the opportunity to work with the British American Business Council (the BABC) or a company who have membership of the BABC. Currently, these internships are located in greater Chicago, greater San Francisco, and greater New York City, but, working with the BABC, we hope to broaden this programme out to take in a couple of other US cities in future years.
- Our lecturers have [recommended websites, films and books](#) for anyone considering choosing American and Canadian studies here

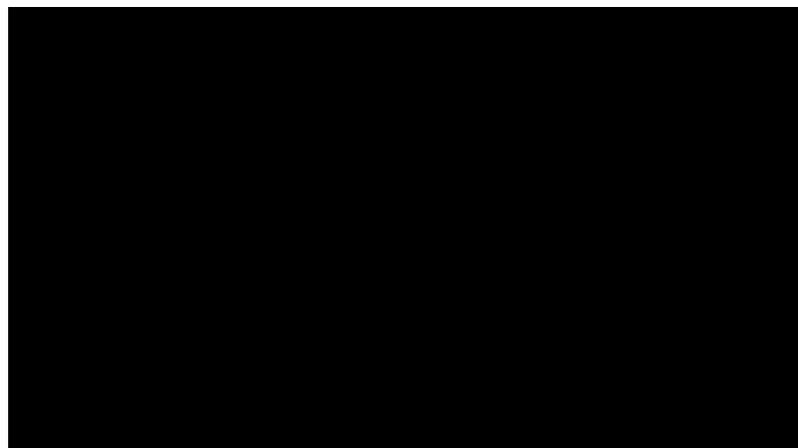
American and Canadian Studies open day talk



In English you have an unparalleled opportunity, not only to engage with the materials of a broad and diverse cultural, textual and linguistic discipline, but also to develop skills in intellectual analysis, critical thinking and articulate expression. We believe that we are partners in learning with our students, and our programme is designed to ensure that you are a fully supported and an active learner.

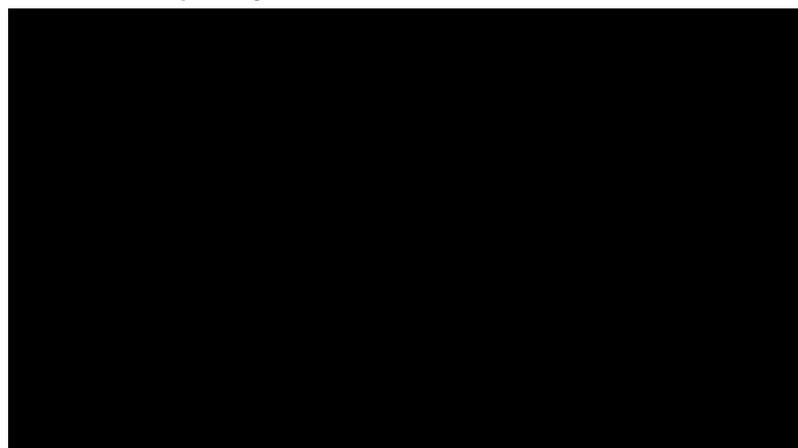
- All English Literature students take a year-long Shakespeare course, drawing on the unique resources of our internationally-renowned Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- BEDSOC (Birmingham English Department Society) is very active in organising social events, for example trips to the theatre and theme nights out such as Hawaii night.
- ? Students at Birmingham will also benefit from frequent lectures and readings from award-winning writers and industry professionals. Speakers in recent years have included novelist David Lodge, poet and writer Jackie Kay, poet Simon Armitage, playwright Simon Stephens and theatre director Greg Doran.
- English literature graduates from the University of Birmingham have a higher than average rate for employability for the subject and are ranked in the top 10 universities nationally for graduate employability.

English Literature open day talk



Dr Daniel Moore delivers the 2014 undergraduate open day talk on studying English Literature at the University of Birmingham.

Joint honours open day talk



Dr Craig Blunt delivers an undergraduate open day talk about studying Joint Honours at the university.

Fees and funding

Standard fees (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/courses/fees/standard>) apply

Learn more about **fees and funding** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate/loans.aspx>).

Scholarships

Learn more about our **scholarships and awards** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate/funding/index.aspx>).

Entry requirements

Number of A levels required: 3

Typical offer: ABB

Required subjects and grades: A Level English Literature or English Language and English Literature at grade A.

Additional information: Other qualifications are considered - learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/requirements\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/requirements)

International students:

We welcome applications from international students and invite you to join our vibrant community of over 4500 international students who represent 150 different countries. We accept a range of qualifications, our [country pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

Depending on your chosen course of study, you may also be interested in the Birmingham Foundation Academy, a specially structured programme for international students whose qualifications are not accepted for direct entry to UK universities. Further details can be found on the [foundation academy web pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/foundation-academy/Pathways/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/foundation-academy/Pathways/index.aspx).

How to apply

Apply through UCAS at [www.ucas.com \(http://www.ucas.com/\)](http://www.ucas.com/)

Learn more about [applying \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/courses/apply\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/courses/apply)



Key Information Set (KIS)

Key Information Sets (KIS) are comparable sets of information about full- or part-time undergraduate courses and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students.

All KIS information has been published on the Unistats website and can also be accessed via the small advert, or 'widget', below. On the [Unistats website \(http://unistats.direct.gov.uk\)](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk) you are able to compare all the KIS data for each course with data for other courses.

The development of Key Information Sets (KIS) formed part of HEFCE's work to enhance the information that is available about higher education. They give you access to reliable and comparable information in order to help you make informed decisions about what and where to study.

The KIS contains information which prospective students have identified as useful, such as student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, tuition fees and student finance, accommodation and professional accreditation.

Learning and teaching

As a Birmingham student you are part of an academic elite and will learn from world-leading experts. At Birmingham we advocate an enquiry based learning approach, from the outset you will be encouraged to become an independent and self-motivated learner, qualities that are highly sought after by employers. We want you to be challenged and will encourage you to think for yourself.

Your learning will take place in a range of different settings, from scheduled teaching in lectures and small group tutorials, to self-study and peer group learning (for example preparing and delivering presentations with your classmates).

Support

To begin with you may find this way of working challenging, but rest assured that we will enable you to make this transition. You will have access to a comprehensive support system that will assist and encourage you, including personal tutors and welfare tutors who can help with both academic and welfare issues, and a formal transition review during your first year to check on your progress and offer you help for any particular areas where you need support.

Our **Academic Skills Centre** also offers you support with your learning. The centre is a place where you can develop your mathematical, academic writing and general academic skills. It is the centre's aim to help you to become a more effective and independent learner through the use of a range of high-quality and appropriate learning support services. These range from drop-in sessions to workshops on a range of topics including note taking, reading, writing and presentation skills.

From the outset, you will be assigned your own **Personal Tutor** who will get to know you as you progress through your studies, providing academic and welfare advice, encouraging you and offering assistance in any areas you may feel you need extra support to make the most of your potential and your time here at Birmingham.

The **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** will provide you with individual support from an academic writing advisor and postgraduate subject-specialist writing tutors. You will receive guidance on writing essays and dissertations at University-level which can be quite different from your previous experiences of writing. Support is given in a variety of ways, such as small-group workshops, online activities, feedback through email and tutorials.

Student experience

Supporting you throughout your transition to University, offering research opportunities and study skills support and helping you develop and prepare for your post-University careers - our [Arts and Law Student Experience Team \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/index.aspx) strive to help you get the most out of your academic experience.



Assessment methods

Studying at degree-level is likely to be very different from your previous experience of learning and teaching. You will be expected to think, discuss and engage critically with the subject and find things out for yourself. We will enable you to make this transition to a new style of learning, and the way that you are assessed during your studies will help you develop the essential skills you need to make a success of your time at Birmingham.

You will be assessed in a variety of ways, and these may be different with each module that you take. You will be assessed through coursework which may take the form of essays, group and individual presentations and formal exams (depending on your chosen degree).

During your first year you will undergo a formal 'transition' review to see how you are getting on and if there are particular areas where you need support. This is in addition to the personal tutor who is based in your school or department and can help with any academic issues you encounter.

At the beginning of each module, you will be given information on how and when you will be assessed for that particular programme of study. You will receive feedback on each assessment within four weeks, so that you can learn from and build on what you have done. You will be given feedback on any exams that you take; if you should fail an exam we will ensure that particularly detailed feedback is made available to enable you to learn for the future.

The principal means of assessment for English are coursework essays and written exams.

Employability

American and Canadian Studies

As a student of American and Canadian Studies you will have an excellent opportunity to develop skills that are highly prized by employers, as well as benefitting from the diversity offered by this multidisciplinary degree. Our graduates understand complex information, write clearly and effectively, can build a case for a particular view, strategy or course of action, respect the views of others even if they disagree with them, and generally think for themselves. Your year abroad will be an asset to you when you apply for jobs. Talking about your experiences abroad will help you stand out in job interviews and help to demonstrate your confidence and maturity to employers.

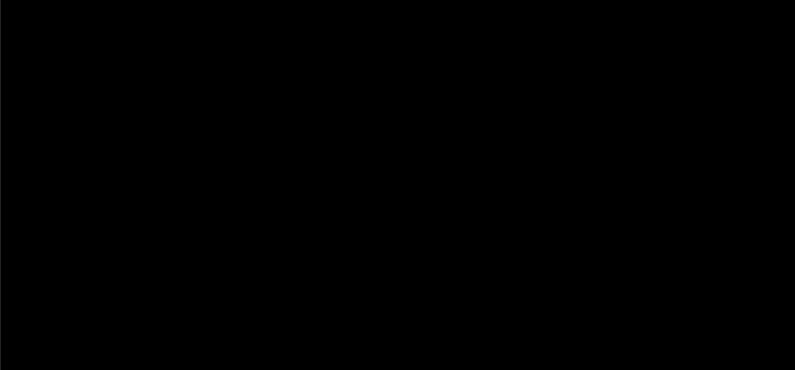
Over 50% of job vacancies advertised for new and recent graduates do not specify a degree subject, so as a graduate of American and Canadian Studies you have a vast potential to enter a wide range of careers, including government, the media, law, accountancy, advertising, human resources and retail management, teaching, research and many other types of employment that offer graduate entry schemes. About 25% of our graduates choose postgraduate study to extend their knowledge of this and similar disciplines, or to prepare for careers such as law and teaching.

Our students start careers with employers including the BBC, Freud Communications, Maverick TV and the National Youth Theatre, in roles as diverse as Business Development Executive, Events Co-ordinator, Financial Analyst, Marketing Executive, Production Assistant, Research Assistant and Youth Mentor.

Whether you have a clear idea of where your future aspirations lie or want to consider the broad range of opportunities available once you have a Birmingham degree, our Careers Network can help you achieve your goal. This is a unique careers guidance service tailored to your academic subject area, offering a specialised team who can give you expert advice. This includes individual careers advice and events to give you insight into the professions and employers of interest to arts graduates. Our Creative careers series is always popular with our students, and features events with employers and professionals from areas such as advertising, PR and communications, careers in journalism and writing, and careers in the theatre.

We also hold events covering careers in teaching, event management, marketing and working with charities; our internship officer develops links with local arts organisations to create some amazing opportunities for students; and you can even apply for our Global Challenge to work overseas on an expenses paid placement during your summer vacation.

English Literature



[Video above - Dr Kate Rumbold discusses careers and employability during the English Literature open day presentation]

Studying for an English BA at Birmingham is an unparalleled opportunity, not only to engage with a diverse cultural, textual and linguistic discipline, but also to develop skills in intellectual analysis, critical thinking and articulate expression – skills that last a lifetime and qualify you for many possible careers. You will also be encouraged to acquire practical skills that you will find just as useful in your future career, including oral presentation, professional documentation, group work and the uses of information technology.

50% of vacancies advertised for new and recent graduates don't specify a degree subject, and English graduates enter a wide range of careers including advertising, journalism and media, government, law, publishing and teaching at every level. About 25% of English graduates pursue postgraduate study to specialise in an academic area or prepare for careers such as law and teaching.

English graduates from Birmingham have a high rate for employability for the subject, and we are ranked in the top ten universities nationally for graduate employability. 93% of our English graduates go into work or study within six months of graduation. Our graduates have started careers with employers including the BBC, Headline Publishing Group, Mirror Group Newspapers and Oxford University Press, in roles such as account executive, editorial assistant, marketing assistant and sales and events coordinator.

Whether you have a clear idea of where your future aspirations lie or want to consider the broad range of opportunities available once you have a Birmingham degree, [our Careers Network \(https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/employability/careers/index.aspx\)](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/employability/careers/index.aspx) can help you achieve your goal. This is a unique careers guidance service tailored to your academic subject area, offering a specialised team who can give you expert advice. This includes individual careers advice and events to give you insight into the professions and employers of interest to arts graduates. Our 'Creative careers' series is always popular with our students, and features events with employers and professionals from areas such as advertising, PR and communications, careers in journalism, publishing and writing, and careers in the theatre.

English alumni profiles



A graphic featuring a portrait of Jo Usmar on the left. To her right, a quote is displayed in a white box with green quotation marks: "I loved the fun, inclusive and creative English course at Birmingham." Below the quote, her name "Jo Usmar" and her profession "Cosmopolitan / freelance writer" are listed in white text on a green background. A small purple arrow icon is at the bottom right of the graphic.

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/edacs/departments/english/undergraduate/alumni-profiles.aspx>

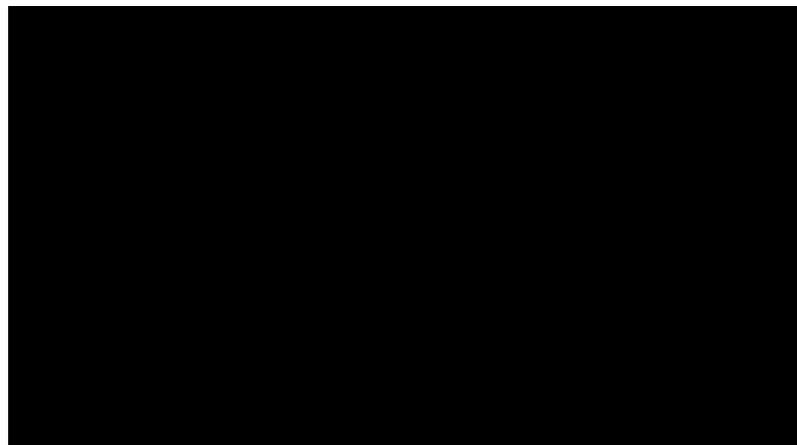
Careers events

We also hold events covering careers in teaching, event management, marketing and working with charities; we're developing links with local arts organisations to create some amazing opportunities for students; and you can even apply for our 'Global Challenge' to work overseas on an expenses paid placement during your summer vacation. We also encourage all our students to apply their skills in the workplace by undertaking internships in the summer; the work experience bursary scheme enables students to apply for funding for placements in those career fields where they are often unpaid.

Extra-curricular activities

To enhance your career prospects even further, you will need to think about engaging in some extra-curricular activities while you're at university to broaden your skills and your network of contacts. This can include the many societies at the Guild of Students and also the many voluntary opportunities offered with local arts organisations. Our employer-endorsed award-winning **Personal Skills Award** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/careers/psa.aspx>) (PSA) recognises your extra-curricular activities, and provides an accredited employability programme designed to improve your career prospects.

Our College of Arts and Law **undergraduate research scholarship scheme** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/studentexperience/urs/index.aspx>) enables interested students to work on a current academic research project being run by one of the College's academic researchers. Undergraduate research scholars gain work experience over the summer after their first or second year and have the chance to develop skills in both collaborative and independent research.



Cultural Internships

Our innovative **Cultural Internships** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/culture/volunteering/regionally.aspx>) offer graduates the opportunity for a six month paid internship at a leading cultural institution in the West Midlands. These internships are a unique opportunity to learn fundamental, transferable business and interpersonal skills, through experience of real work in an established cultural institution. Our current partners include Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham REP, Birmingham Royal Ballet, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust and the Library of Birmingham. We have plans to expand the scheme to include our own major cultural assets, such as Winterbourne House, the Lapworth Museum, and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. This scheme will give you professional experience to set you apart in a competitive graduate market.

We also offer voluntary work which complements your studies by helping you gain practical experiences in occupational settings while contributing back to society. This can bring new skills that will be useful throughout your future and can make a positive impact on your learning whilst at university. Volunteering enables you to develop skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, self-confidence and self-discipline all of which can be transferred into your studies.

Your Birmingham degree is evidence of your ability to succeed in a demanding academic environment. Employers target Birmingham students for their drive, diversity, communication and problem-solving skills, their team-working abilities and cultural awareness, and our graduate employment statistics have continued to climb at a rate well above national trends. If you make the most of the wide range of services you will be able to develop your career from the moment you arrive.

Additional accreditation

No



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