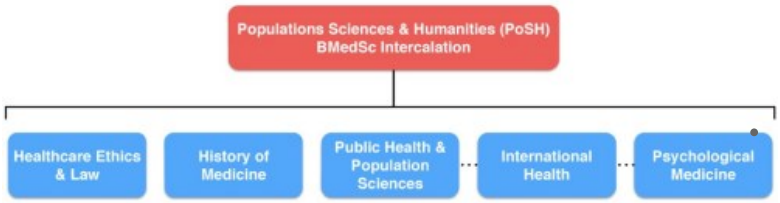
University of Birmingham

Healthcare Ethics and Law - Intercalated Degree

As a medical or dentistry student, you may choose to take a year out from your medical course and study on one of our intercalated Bachelor in Medical Science degree programmes. During this year you will specialise in a particular subject, acquire skills in analysing and interpreting research papers and also gain substantial, direct experience of novel research.

Healthcare Ethics and Law is one of the five Population Sciences and Humanities (PoSH) degree programmes that we offer (see figure).



When applying to undertake a PoSH degree programme, you have the option to provide a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice. It is therefore important that you also familiarize yourself with the programmes listed below:

BMedSc History of Medicine (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/HistoryofMedicineBMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)

- **BMedSc International Health (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/InternationalHealthBMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)**
- **BMedSc Psychological Medicine (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/PsychologicalMedicineBMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)**
- **BMedSc Public Health and Population Sciences (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/PublicHealthPopulationScienceBMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)**

Other BMedSc intercalation programmes are also available:

- **BMedSc Medical Sciences (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/medical-sciences-BMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)** - this course is open to University of Birmingham students only
- **BMedSc Clinical Science (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/courses/med/ClinicalScienceBMedSc-IntercalatedDegree.aspx)**

Course fact file

Duration: 1 year Full Time

Places Available: 12 (approximately 12 students per year)

Start date: September / October annually depending on published term dates

Contact

If after reviewing the information contained in these pages you have any further questions please contact either Dr Jon Ives, Healthcare Ethics and Law Programme Lead at **j.c.ives@bham.ac.uk (mailto:J.Jones.1@bham.ac.uk)** or Lucy Milton, Course Administrator at **lucy.m.milton@bham.ac.uk (mailto:)**

Follow us on Twitter (http://twitter.com/unibirm_MDS)

Contact us on Facebook (http://facebook.com/collegemds)

Details

Health care ethics and law is a broad field of study, which covers a range of interesting and challenging topics. The range of ethical and legal issues in healthcare is ever expanding, fuelled by both technological and social change. The role of the media in raising public awareness about the provision and development of health care means that now, more than ever, doctors have to be able to think through the ethical aspects of their practice, and communicate it effectively. Ethics and law on the medical undergraduate curriculum covers the basic principles and issues that all professionals have to be minimally aware of in order to practice. If you enjoyed that part of the curriculum but want to explore issues in greater depth, this is the course for you!

On this programme you will examine the role that moral and legal frameworks play in helping to understand and resolve ethical and legal dilemmas. You will learn about the theoretical basis for those frameworks, and learn how to use them to think critically about ethics and law in healthcare. You will develop knowledge of moral theory (philosophy) and key aspects of medical law, and also transferable skills in critical thinking reasoning, argumentation and writing.

You will have the opportunity to undertake your own independent research project, using either traditional library-based ethics and law research methods or incorporating the collection and analysis of empirical data.

Why study this course

This course will equip you to critically analyse practical ethical and legal dilemmas in healthcare and academic ethical and legal work. It will also give you the skills to carry out your own independent research on ethical and legal issues in medicine. We offer the opportunity to develop transferable qualitative research skills, culminating in an 'empirical bioethics' dissertation project.

The course attracts students from other Universities in the UK as we are one of only 4 programmes nationally to offer Health Care Ethics and Law as an intercalating degree.

On completion of this course you should have knowledge and understanding of:

- A broad range of contemporary issues in health care ethics and law.

- Central ethical theories, principles and arguments relevant to contemporary health care ethics
- Core health care law, including central legal principles, Statutes and case law
- The inter-relationships between ethics, law and health care practice
- Relevant texts and authors important in the field of health care ethics

In addition to enhancing knowledge and understanding we believe our teaching methods, with emphasis on feedback and easy access to support, strongly support development of range of both subject specific and transferable skills.

Subject specific:

- The skills to evaluate opposing arguments, to formulate and consider the best arguments for different views and to identify the weakest elements of the most persuasive argument (i.e. critical analysis skills)
- Development of precision of thought and expression in the analysis of complex ethical and legal problems within health care
- The ability to identify how your own personal moral values affect your approaches to decision making
- The development of the confidence and ability to identify and challenge unprofessional behaviour in clinical practice, and be able to provide practical solutions

Transferable:

- The ability to critically read and appraise research evidence
- The ability to produce scientifically valid research
- The ability to manage a research project from conception to completion with enhanced project management skills which will be transferable to other aspects of your career
- The ability to effectively communicate ideas or scientific findings through a range of commonly used presentation mechanisms including oral presentation, poster presentation, debating, production of a journal article and essay writing.
- Enhanced independent learning skills
- Greater awareness of team working and skills to support this in clinical and academic settings
- Improved ability to think logically and broadly about a range of problems, drawing on a variety of disciplines to support arguments

Student testimonials

“Very Challenging. Very rewarding and instructive experience”

“It has made me a much more independent learner and has given me more confidence in both reading research and negotiating my own”

“Broadened my knowledge and perspective”

“Teaching was great and interactive”

Modules

Semester 1

During Semester one you will undertake three specialist modules in:

Biomedical Ethics and Law (30 credits)

In this module you will cover the basics of moral and legal theory. You will learn about ethical theories (such as deontology, virtue theory, utilitarianism etc.), principles (such as autonomy, consent, personhood), key issues in applied ethics (such as abortion, ethics at the end of life, public health ethics, reproductive ethics etc.). You will also cover key topics in medical law (such as negligence, body as property, the Mental Health Act, human rights).

This module is assessed by two essays(one on ethical theory and one on applied ethics), and a legal case presentation.

Research Methods in Bioethics (30 credits)

In this module you will be introduced to the various kinds of methodology used in medical ethics and law, covering the following key skills:

- Writing philosophical and legal essays
- How to analyse and construct an argument
- Searching legal databases
- Empirical methods in bioethics (and how to integrate empirical and ethical analysis)

This module is assessed by two mini-assignments (essay planning and analysing and analogy), an interview based empirical bioethics project, contribution to a formal debate, and a research protocol.

Ethics in Research (10 credits)

In this module you will cover key issues in research ethics, including: research on vulnerable populations; informed consent; research governance; research in developing countries; payment, risk and exploitation; the use of animals in research. This module is assessed by a single essay.

This module is also offered as an option for students intercalating in Public Health and Population Sciences

Semester 2

During Semester 2 you will undertake a unique research project (worth 50 credits), supervised by a member of staff. Research projects are selected at the start of semester one, and you will normally begin setting up during that semester. In fact, many of the semester one assignments are designed to help you develop your research project. You can choose a research project that focuses on philosophical ethics, law, or a combination of empirical data collection and ethical/legal analysis.

This is the module list for 2014/15, but the programme continues to evolve and you should check the website regularly for any changes for the academic year 2015/16.

Fees and funding

Standard Fees (/students/fees/index.aspx) Apply

All students are entitled to reclaim up to £500 project expenses for conduction of their research. Claims must be accompanied by original receipts. Further to this students who incur travel costs are eligible to apply for an Arthur Thompson Travel Award (up to £500). Applications for these awards will be considered at the end of the programme of study and are not guaranteed. These sources of funding are available to all students irrespective of their primary University of study.

Internal bursaries:

All students who are registered on the MBChB or Dental Programmes at the University of Birmingham are eligible to apply for a bursary to support them during their period of study. The intention to apply should be indicated on the application form and students expressing an intention will receive further information. Bursaries are currently set at £3,000 and are limited. Students with an overall mean mark of <65% in year 2 of their programme of study are unlikely to be awarded a bursary.

Our funding sources mean that we are unable to offer bursaries to students from outside of Birmingham.

External bursaries:

The College usually receives an invitation each year from the Royal College of Physicians to submit a limited number of applications for their Wolfson intercalated programme. The deadline for this is usually the end of March which means the programme needs to shortlist by mid-March. Bursaries are up to £5000 and are nationally competitive. Our students have a very good record in securing such awards. Any student interested in applying needs to contact the Admissions Tutor (Dr Lesley Roberts, l.m.roberts@bham.ac.uk) by the 31st of January in the year in which they plan to apply.

Eligible students should:

Demonstrate a consistent and outstanding academic track record (an overall mean mark >70% in year 2 and consistently high marks in other years). N.B. Because of the need to show consistent academic achievement it is expected that students will be in year 3 or 4 at the time of application. A second year applicant who can demonstrate excellence may be considered but should contact the admissions tutor at the earliest opportunity to discuss this).

Be applying for an intercalation in one of our science programmes (International Health, Psychological Medicine or Public Health and Population Sciences). As this bursary relates to science projects students on humanities programmes (Health care ethics and law and History of Medicine) should not apply (but should make contact with the relevant programme lead to enquire whether there are any discipline specific bursaries currently available nationally).

Have a research focus or area of interest (Support will be given during February to develop this into an application).

Be prepared to work on their application (including designing a research project) during February and early March.

All eligible students who express an interest will have the opportunity to meet with the Admissions Tutor to discuss the application and receive guidance in drafting an application. Further to this there will be the opportunity to submit one draft application by the 28th February for comment. All students will then be required to submit their application by the specified deadline (varies annually but likely to be mid-March). Students will be informed if their application has been selected for submission to the Royal College within 2 weeks. Any student submitted will receive an early and unconditional place on the programme. Unsuccessful applicants will be able to use their work in their application for an internal bursary.

Entry requirements

Applications for this programme will be accepted from students wishing to intercalate after year 3 or 4 of their medical studies.

Applications From Students Not Currently Registered at Birmingham

We are happy to consider applications for any of the programmes within the Population Sciences and Humanities subjects from students from other institutions. We have a strong track record over recent years in supporting these students and facilitating integration into their new institution.

Applications from students from other universities should be made on our **standard application form (/Documents/college-mds/courses/undergraduate/bmedscintercalatedpopulationscienceandhumanities/BMedScPoSHapplication-form2015-16.doc)** and must be accompanied by a transcript of marks from your current institution. Should an offer of a place be made to you further admission forms will be sent from the University via our Course Administrator.

We are always happy to discuss our programmes with students from other universities. If you have any queries or wish to discuss the opportunities available to you in Birmingham please contact us.

International students:

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)** .

How to apply

To apply, please down load and complete the **application form (/Documents/college-mds/courses/undergraduate/bmedscintercalatedpopulationscienceandhumanities/BMedScPoSHapplication-form2015-16.doc)**

Learning and teaching

As a Birmingham student you are part of an academic elite and will learn from world-leading experts. From the outset you will be encouraged to become an independent and self-motivated learner. 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 and supervision

Every student will have at least one academic supervisor who will work with them closely during their research project. The programme lead, Dr Jonathan Ives, will offer general support on all aspects of the course, and other members of staff will provide support and guidance on their teaching areas. Students will also have access to regular research clinics, both in ethics and qualitative research. These clinics are timetabled, and operate a booking system.

Past projects

Below are some examples of past research projects undertaken by Health Care Ethics and Law students:

How should we manage extremely premature neonates born at the limits of viability? An ethical analysis.
Mapping the terrain in empirical bioethics
Should UK law be changes to allow financial incentives for organ donors
How can I be sure that you are sure that I am dead?
Conscientious objection and its role in the NHS
When autonomy should not rule: How the Israeli Patient's Rights Act could inspire English healthcare policy in the case of patients who refuse life-saving treatment
Ought medical students be allowed in the delivery room? An interview Study.
An ethical analysis of altruistic living kidney donation in the UK
Parental perceptions and attitudes on facial reconstruction surgery in Down's Syndrome
What is the ethical basis for publicly funding reproductive technologies?

Our facilities

The College of Medical and Dental Sciences houses state-of-the art facilities to support a range of teaching, learning and research activity.

Our facilities ensure that students receive the best possible learning experience by working in a modern environment. Among our most recent developments include a refurbishment of the Medical School foyer, Barnes library and Wolfson Centre for Medical Education.

Explore our facilities and take a tour by moving around our 360-degree panoramas:

ERROR:

Adobe Flashplayer 10.1 (or higher) or a
HTML5 Browser with CSS 3D Transforms or WebGL support are required!

Assessment methods

You'll 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, laboratory-based work (depending on your chosen degree) and formal exams.

At the beginning of each module, you'll be given information on how and when you'll be assessed for that particular programme of study. You'll receive feedback on each assessment within four weeks, so that you can learn from and build on what you have done. You'll 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.

Employability

Preparation for your career should be one of the first things you think about as you start university. 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.

Our unique careers guidance service is tailored to your academic subject area, offering a specialised team (in each of the five academic colleges) who can give you expert advice. Our team source exclusive work experience opportunities to help you stand out amongst the competition, with mentoring, global internships and placements available to you. Once you have a career in your sights, one-to-one support with CV's and job applications will help give you the edge. In addition, our employer-endorsed award-winning Personal Skills Award (PSA) recognises your extra-curricular activities, and provides an accredited employability programme designed to improve your career prospects.

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.

Find out more about **Careers Network. (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers)**

© University of Birmingham 2015