

Chamberlain's vision: A great school of universal instruction



In 1900, great institutions of higher learning in the UK existed in Cambridge, Oxford, London, Durham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Belfast. While compulsory education had been introduced in 1880 for children between the ages of 5 and 10 years old, the majority of the population entered work by the age of 14.

Joseph Chamberlain, the great London born politician, was well aware of these limiting factors when he proposed the establishment of the University of Birmingham, to complete his vision for the city. Chamberlain sought to provide 'a great school of universal instruction', so that 'the most important work of original research should be continuously carried on under most favourable circumstances.' It was his ambition that 'the individual trades of the new University [would] forever associate their name and their industry with this new institution.'

Many aspects of Chamberlain's vision continue to inspire and guide the University today, including our continuing responsibilities to our region, providing a skilled, professional workforce and groundbreaking research that benefits regional industries.