

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Gifts of Time

2026

We volunteer
We activate

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What we have achieved together

It is a privilege to introduce this year's Gifts of Time impact report as the new Director of Development and Alumni Relations. Since taking on the role in February, I have been struck by the incredible generosity of our alumni and friends.

The University of Birmingham was founded as England's first civic university over a century ago, and that commitment to serving our community remains at the heart of the University. This is evident in the remarkable breadth of your support over the last year, the effects of which are felt across every corner of our campus. By sharing your time and experiences through our mentoring networks, you have given our students the preparation to step into their careers with clarity and confidence, with insights that textbooks simply cannot replicate.

We see the direct results of your support in our graduates, many of whom are now securing roles at major global organisations. Whether you have delivered a guest lecture, offered individual career advice or spoken to prospective students as a recruitment ambassador, your stories are our greatest asset. You show the next generation that arriving at Birmingham is the beginning of a lifelong community.

This report celebrates some of the amazing examples of activity that have been made possible through over 17,000 volunteering hours that you have collectively given this year. Each hour recorded represents a student inspired, a career launched or a connection made.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the University and our students, and for being such a vital part of our success.



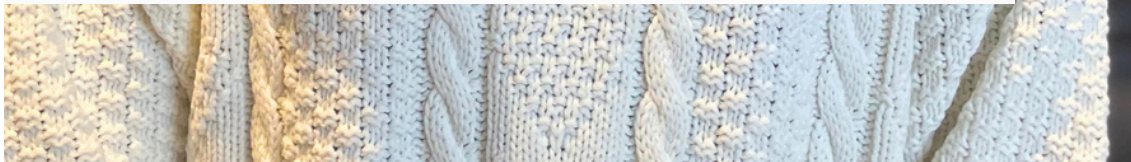
Andrew Harris
Director of Development and Alumni Relations





Guiding students to fulfil their potential

Mentoring connects students and recent graduates with experienced professionals to improve their confidence, knowledge and decision-making. By matching mentors and mentees based on their specific industry or subject field, these programmes provide personalised guidance that helps students prepare for life after university.



Mentoring at Birmingham

Mentoring spans every stage of the student journey, including peer support, business coaching through our business start-up scheme, UoB Elevate, and targeted widening participation schemes.

Distinct within this area is the Alumni Leadership Mentoring Programme (ALMP). By pairing motivated individuals with sector-leading alumni, the initiatives help students map out their long-term career goals and understand what leadership looks like in practice. Mentors offer invaluable insights into competitive industries and public policy, giving students a clearer sense of direction and the confidence to pursue high-level roles upon graduation.

Final-year Biomedical Science student Jaspreet recently completed a year of mentoring with Sam Decombel (BSc Biological Sciences (Genetics) 2002; PhD 2006, Chief Executive Officer at FitnessGenes).

Having benefitted from mentoring while establishing her own business at Birmingham, Sam has returned to volunteer as a mentor for the past nine years to pass that invaluable support on to the next generation.

For Jaspreet, the opportunity to learn from an alumna who has successfully built her own company offered reassurance during a crucial career crossroads. The welcoming atmosphere of the group sessions allows mentees to speak openly about their anxieties and ambitions. By hearing Sam share personal insights from her own career milestones, Jaspreet learned that setbacks are simply a natural feature of any professional path and found the opportunity a meaningful conclusion to her final year of undergraduate studies at the University.

We look forward to following the progress of Jaspreet as she navigates life after graduation.

> I began the mentoring programme as someone who lacked confidence when meeting new people and felt daunted by the future and my career. I am now leaving the programme feeling reassured that I will get to where I want to be. I understand that I may face challenges along the way, but these are all part of the journey.
>
> **Jaspreet Basra (BSc Biomedical Science, final-year student)**



Jaspreet and Sam speaking in a mentoring session

Connecting with leading alumni over lunch

Our Lunch with a Leader sessions continue to offer students an invaluable chance to connect with experienced professionals and successful alumni who have shaped various organisations across the globe.

Sessions take place across both the Edgbaston and Dubai campuses and, because these workshops are kept intentionally small, the format gives them an opportunity to ask direct questions about career progression, industry trends and the realities of senior roles. This gives students the clarity and confidence to think ambitiously about their own futures, grounded in the experience and wisdom of alumni who once sat in the very same lecture theatres.

Where can a psychology degree take you?

Students from medicine, business management and psychology met with Raffaela Goodby (BSc Psychology, 2001, Chief People Officer of Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital), for an inspiring and wide-ranging discussion.

As a former Birmingham psychology student, Raffaela was perfectly suited to demonstrate how transferable skills can shape a meaningful career in public service. The conversation focussed on the current situation of the healthcare sector, staff wellbeing and the vital role of compassionate leadership. Most importantly, Raffaela highlighted to the students that they should seek to follow their genuine interests after graduation.

> I loved talking to these amazing young people during the Lunch with a Leader session, where I was able to share some of my memories from my time at the University of Birmingham and reflect with very clever people on their own aspirations.
>
> I was pleased to be able to share how I had used my psychology degree and my experiences at University to help others in the NHS and public service. I would highly recommend it if you get the opportunity to be involved.
>
> **Raffaela Goodby**



From grassroots to the boardroom



Students from across the University enjoyed a rare glimpse into the world of professional sports when Mark Fairbrother (BSc Economics, 2001, MBA, 2014, Managing Director, Millwall Football Club) hosted an intimate Lunch with a Leader session.

A double graduate of the Birmingham Business School, Mark shared his career journey from financial services into the highly competitive football industry. He spoke openly about the realities of senior leadership, offering students a practical understanding of how a modern club balances on-pitch performance with commercial responsibilities.

Mark discussed the importance of financial sustainability, fan engagement and collaborative working, providing students with the direction and assurance needed to navigate major career transitions. The opportunity to ask direct questions about breaking into the sector left the group with insights into the skills required to succeed at the highest level.

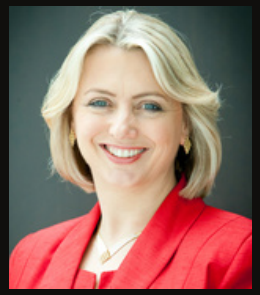
Charting a course in medical leadership

We were delighted to welcome alumna Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard (MSc Primary Care, 2003; PhD General Practice, 2010) back to campus in March 2026.

As National Chief Medical Officer for Health New Zealand / Te Whatu Ora – the New Zealand equivalent of the NHS in the UK, Dame Helen's experience includes serving as Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners and Head of Primary Care Teaching at the University, offering students a unique insight into national clinical leadership across the health system.

Eight students from medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and biomedical science sat down with Dame Helen to ask questions about her leadership journey and the lessons she has learned along the way.

> It was just so uplifting to head back to the beautiful Edgbaston campus and spend time with a diverse group of students interested in healthcare and biomedical science.
>
> Their different perspectives on solutions for the future, their energy and passion to make a difference was energising and our discussions were lively and great fun. I am so hopeful for our shared future when I see what talent is in the University of Birmingham pipeline.
>
> **Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard**



Inspiring innovation

The power of collective alumni support was demonstrated when two graduates from the 1990s combined forces to create a bespoke industry experience for Birmingham students.

Matt Buskell (BSc Computer Science and Software Engineering, 1996; Enterprise AI), RISE Lead for UKI at Google, spotted fellow alumnus Gideon Kay (BSc Computer Science and Software Engineering, 1993), who at the time was Partner and Chief Technology Officer at Deloitte, featured in our previous Gifts of Time report. Recognising a natural synergy between their roles Matt, via the University, reached out to Gideon to discuss a potential collaboration. Together, they designed an exclusive visit to the Google AI Playground at the Google Cloud Startup Hub in Shoreditch.

Following a competitive application process, 28 final-year BSc and MSc Artificial Intelligence students travelled to London in December 2025. The action-packed day of discovery was a mix of hands-on sessions with the latest Google Cloud innovations and an expert panel discussion chaired by Matt, which allowed students to quiz Gideon, two Google engineers and a Google for Start-ups Strategic Partnerships Manager.

The visit gave students a real feel for life in the technology sector, showing how creativity and technical execution come together in the workplace. Meeting senior leaders who treated them as peers was an incredible boost to their confidence, leaving everyone in the group feeling inspired about the career paths ahead of them.

> Success in tech is based on the passion you have for it. The organisers and speakers at the event all had the same thing in common - their shared passion for technology.
>
> **Student attendee**

> Thank you so much to Matt, Gideon and everyone who organised this. If I am to speak on behalf of some of my classmates who come from the same country as me (India), I'd say what we lack sorely back home are senior figures that really have passion like this that is palpable. Everyone was spoken to not as a student, but as a person, with a genuine interest in helping us out.
>
> **Student attendee**



Preparing Birmingham students for the world of work

A university degree is about more than academic excellence; it is about preparing students to succeed in reaching their full potential once they graduate. Our employability programmes equip students with the confidence, critical thinking and practical skills they need to step into the workplace, ensuring our graduates are ready to make an immediate impact.

Alumni give our students a brilliant head start in this journey by returning to campus to share their experiences, whether delivering guest lectures, speaking on career panels or speaking to students at networking events. This insight introduces students to various career paths, new routes into professions and shows exactly how the concepts they study in the lecture theatre apply to real-world careers.

'Behind the Mic' with Lennie Ware

We welcomed co-host of the hit Table Manners podcast Lennie Ware (BA Social Policy, 1973) back to campus in March 2026.

Lennie captivated an audience of 45 students with stories from her time in broadcasting and the origins of the show's unique format, and what goes into creating its warm, intimate atmosphere.

Students heard Lennie's insights into the recording process and how she and her daughter, Jessie Ware, select their wide range of celebrity guests.

Lennie spoke about the evolution of podcasts and the shift to audio-visual formats. She explored how social media shapes content discoverability, the storytelling style of modern shows and the craft of hosting conversations that feel both personal and universal.

She also generously stayed behind to film with the College of Arts and Law marketing team, creating wonderful content that will be used to support wider university communications.





'Climate and Culture' with Adam Met

Dr Adam Met (PhD Law, 2022) is the bassist for the multi-platinum indie-pop band AJR, a Columbia University professor and the founder of the climate non-profit Planet Reimagined. He brings a wonderfully unique perspective to environmental advocacy. He came back to campus and delivered a thought-provoking lecture to students about how he uses his global musical platform and his legal expertise to drive real climate action.



Rather than just focussing on the science, Adam explored why data alone rarely changes minds; sharing how storytelling, identity and community are what truly inspire people to engage with the climate crisis. By showing how music, media and a shared sense of belonging can spark political action, he gave students a fresh framework for seeing culture as a powerful force for policy change.

Get Ahead in Government

The Get Ahead in Government programme supports underrepresented students, particularly those on our Pathways to Birmingham (P2B) access scheme, by connecting them with graduates working across public service, policy and local government.

Alumni volunteers give their time to run workshops, lead panel discussions and offer advice on breaking into the Civil Service and think tanks. These interactive sessions range from introductory workshops to help students find the areas most interesting to them, through to practical advice on applications and interview preparation. For participants who are the first in their family to attend university, hearing directly from graduates can offer real reassurance in seeing that university builds adaptable skills suited to many different sectors, regardless of their specific degree subject.

By sharing their early career experiences, volunteers help build confidence and expand options for students. The success of these programmes relies entirely on these graduates who generously give their time to support our university community.





Helping students achieve their goals

With the support of alumni volunteers, the University hosted Beyond the Pitch, a football careers day for undergraduate and postgraduate students.


David Gill speaking at Beyond the Pitch

Finding a career in football can feel incredibly difficult for students. To show what is actually possible, 21 alumni returned to campus to demystify the sector. Former Chief Executive Officer of Manchester United, David Gill (BCom Industrial Economics and Business Studies, 1978, DUniv, 2011) opened the day by sharing the realities of running one of the world's biggest clubs.

The event showed students that they don't have to be on the pitch to build a career in sport. Graduates working at Birmingham City Football Club and Millwall Football Club discussed the commercial operations and people management needed to keep professional clubs running. Round-table discussions also gave students a chance to ask about roles in marketing, media and communications.

For those interested in the science of sport, graduates from several Championship football clubs explained how they support player performance. Five physiotherapists joined a panel on fitness and rehabilitation, while other alumni focused on coaching, sharing how they develop both professional and amateur players.

The day also covered the growth of data in sport, with speakers from Shrewsbury Town Football Club and Leeds United demonstrating how clubs use data to make recruitment decisions. Looking at the wider game, David Reeve, the Head of Development at The Football Association, joined the event to outline career routes in community sport.

Across seven sessions, students from all departments got to speak directly with graduates who have built successful careers in the industry. The event gave students practical steps and a direct link to graduates working at the highest levels of the game.

Scaling global talent: Intercampus Enterprise Competition

Students from our Edgbaston and Dubai campuses competed in the final of the Intercampus Enterprise Competition. The event was delivered by the B-Enterprising team, the University's student entrepreneurship service within Careers Network.

While B-Enterprising helps students explore early business ideas and build skills, the competition also acts as a pipeline for UoB Elevate, our dedicated start-up incubator based at The Exchange in the city centre. This partnership helps young founders take their first pitching steps before they're ready to scale their businesses through UoB Elevate's 12-month business growth programme.

This year's competition brought together global student talent. Over 1,000 students expressed interest, with 20 finalists pitching plans ranging from medical diagnostics to sustainable food initiatives.

Audrey Berling, a professional squash player graduating this summer, won the £5,000 top prize, which was generously sponsored by alumnus Chris Outram. She will use the funding to develop Palmerton Collective, her business producing competition-grade racket sports apparel, specifically designed for women.

Alumni Emma Johnson and David Campbell (BSc Economics, 2012), and local business mentors, volunteered their time to support the finalists. David, who works at SureScreen Diagnostics, also offered his knowledge with follow-up advice to finalists from both campuses who are developing medical technology and diagnostic start-ups.

We're grateful to all of the alumni and supporters who give their time, funding and expertise to help our brilliant student entrepreneurs in turning their ideas into sustainable and successful businesses.









Supporting student recruitment, globally

Our global network of recruitment ambassadors plays a vital role in attracting the brightest minds to Birmingham. By sharing honest insights into student life and the long-term value of our degrees, they introduce prospective students around the world to the exceptional academic and cultural opportunities that make our University a leading global destination.

Navigating the university application process can feel daunting, especially for international students managing visa requirements and relocation. Our dedicated recruitment initiatives demystify this journey, ensuring that talented individuals can access a Birmingham education regardless of their background or geography.

The success of this work relies entirely on authentic, human connection. By sharing their own personal journeys, these student and alumni ambassadors provide a trusted voice that brings our campus to life, giving future students the confidence to choose Birmingham for their studies.

Local advice for new global journeys

Our Southeast Asian alumni community held two gatherings in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to help the next generation of Birmingham students prepare for university life. These events connected incoming international students with established graduates, offering them direct peer support and practical advice before they leave home.

Singapore

At the Singapore gathering, 45 alumni, offer holders and their families met at the Secret Haven. The evening featured a legal sector Q&A with Timothy Chan (LLB Law, 2019), who is now a litigation and arbitration lawyer at Braddell Brothers. Timothy shared his experiences of moving from an Edgbaston law degree to practising in Singapore. His practical advice helped ease the anxiety of moving abroad for many incoming students, who used the opportunity to ask questions about campus life, accommodation and adjusting to the UK.

Malaysia

In Kuala Lumpur, our Malaysian alumni community brought together graduates and incoming students, with Yap Xue You (LLB Law and Business, 2022 associate at Lee Hishammuddin Allen & Gledhill) speaking about building a legal career in Malaysia after graduation. The session encouraged alumni to share their contact details with offer holders, setting up informal mentoring networks that will support the students throughout their degrees and when they eventually return home to start their careers.



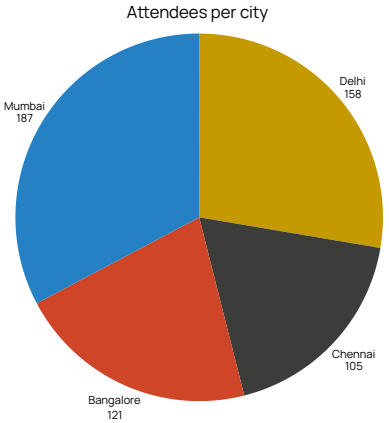


Record-breaking engagement in India

Local alumni volunteers stood alongside academics at the Birmingham Connect sessions in India to share their personal Birmingham journeys, helping to attract 571 attendees across four major cities. This represents a fantastic 46 per cent increase in attendance compared to 2024, reflecting the growing excitement in India to study at the University of Birmingham.

The sessions revealed strong interest in technology and business, and the growing appeal of our Dubai campus, which caught the attention of nearly 30 per cent of total attendees.

We look forward to welcoming this community of enthusiastic offer holders to our campuses.



Building Connections

We are launching a new mentoring scheme this September to support outstanding scholarship recipients from India and China as they prepare for university.

Three high-profile graduates from each country have volunteered to mentor incoming scholars, offering personal guidance as they begin their studies. The project matches each student with a local alumnus for one-to-one sessions throughout the academic year.

As well as their professional expertise, these mentors will be a familiar connection for students before they arrive in Birmingham. By sharing their first-hand experience of studying at Birmingham through to moving to forge successful careers back home, giving our international scholars support and a familiar connection before they even arrive on campus.



Volunteers supporting recruitment activities

We are incredibly grateful to the many alumni who supported our recruitment events. Choosing where to complete an undergraduate degree is a significant decision and alumni are in a unique position to offer clear, authentic insights into student life at Birmingham and the career pathway that might be available to graduates.

In the 2025/2026 academic year, the College of Life and Environmental Sciences welcomed alumni to speak at events such as open days, offer holder visitor days and webinars on over forty occasions. Their contributions highlighted where a Birmingham degree can lead:

- Psychology and human neuroscience graduates joined panel events to explain the transferrable skills built during their studies and the wide range of careers open to them.
- Geography, earth and environmental sciences alumni delivered short presentations on their career paths, detailing roles across intelligence, conservation, and construction.
- Bioscience graduates shared how skills like coding and scientific communication helped them secure roles such as clinical trial coordinators, medical affairs officers and documentary producers.

Alongside attending recruitment events, graduates from across the University have given their time to help produce high-quality digital resources. Lucius Pan (BSc Psychology, 2017) returned to the Edgbaston campus to shoot a video discussing his experiences studying in the UK, and several alumni have generously taken the time to write short personal profiles which are then used across a range of digital platforms to inform and inspire those looking to complete a degree.

Publishing these volunteer stories across digital channels transforms how prospective students view Birmingham, replacing traditional marketing with authentic human voices. Outreach work in regional schools and community projects helps demystify the university experience, making higher education feel genuinely attainable for first-generation and underrepresented applicants.

These insights demonstrate that a Birmingham degree builds the vital skills, connections and sense of purpose students need to make an impact from the day they graduate.

















Get involved

Would you like to explore other ways you can get involved and support students and research at Birmingham through volunteering?

Alumni, students and friends of the University are making an incredible impact on our communities, from inspiring students and supporting their career aspirations to contributing to groundbreaking research projects.

Get in touch at: **alumni-volunteers@contacts.bham.ac.uk**

Find out more at:
birmingham.ac.uk/volunteering



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