



#gobcu

Spring 2013

Charlotte Powers > Rolls-Royce
Martina Aleksieva > Warner Bros
Harriet Townrow > New Cross
Hospital **Alessandra Scala** >
Beattie McGuinness Bungay (BMB)
Meanaz Akhtar > Involvement
Innovation **Chris Gatt** > Vodafone
See where our students go >



World of Opportunity

Giving students experience
of the workplace



Exciting investment

New media building
nears completion



Supporting innovation

New space for budding
entrepreneurs



Greatest graduates

Honouring our Alumni
of the Year

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Check out our online prospectus at www.bcu.ac.uk/prospectus or visit www.bcu.ac.uk/courses for the latest updates.



Welcome

A degree from Birmingham City University gives you so much more than an academic qualification. Our close links with employers help you to gain work-related skills through industrial placements and real-life projects, our award-winning Student Academic Partners scheme teams up students and staff to find ways to make our teaching even better, and our lively Students' Union offers a wide range of sporting and social opportunities.

We are also helping our students to get involved in university life through our own dedicated employment agency, 'OpportUNity – Student Jobs on Campus' which allows students to apply for a range of real jobs around the University, providing understanding of the application process and real-life work experience for those who are successful.

“Find out more about what makes Birmingham City University so many students' first choice”

Professor Cliff Allan
Vice-Chancellor
Birmingham City University

In this magazine you can find out more about what makes Birmingham City University so many students' first choice – the investment in our facilities, our focus on employability and our innovative approaches to learning. You can also read about the achievements of some of our current students and recent graduates who have gone on to enjoy success as a result of the opportunities they were given here.

We have also included some useful advice for you as you prepare to start your journey into higher education. This includes information on the next stage of the application process, our top tips on what to remember in the first few weeks of university, how to get involved in the Students' Union and what our home city of Birmingham has to offer.

We look forward to seeing you later this year and I hope that this magazine will help you to learn a little more about us. If you have any queries in the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch – our friendly Course Enquiries team would be delighted to help you.



Ten reasons to choose Birmingham City University

We know that choosing which university to study at is a huge decision. If you are still making up your mind, here are some of the reasons you may want to study with us. And if you're already planning to come here, here's why you've made the right choice!

- One of the UK's top 10 universities for our spending on facilities (Complete University Guide 2013) with a £180 million investment programme.
- 27th of 124 universities for the most students in graduate-level jobs (Sunday Times University Guide 2013).
- 13th best institution for 'value added', measuring students' improvement from entry qualifications to degree results (The Guardian University Guide 2013).
- A student satisfaction rating of 83 per cent – with 87 per cent of our students agreeing that staff were good at explaining things and 86 per cent saying staff were enthusiastic about what they taught (National Student Survey 2012).
- We work with companies like Apple, Cisco, Cartier, Bosch and Hewlett Packard to develop cutting-edge curriculums and collaborate on course projects.
- We provide the opportunity to gain industry experience through work placements, mentoring schemes, overseas study visits and sandwich courses.
- Many household names – including John Lewis, BMW, Warner Bros, British Sky Broadcasting and Harvey Nichols – welcome our students on placement.
- Our in-house employment agency 'OpportUNity – Student Jobs on Campus' helps students to find part-time work with the University.
- Times Higher Education award winner for Outstanding Support for Students (2010), in recognition of our Student Academic Partners scheme, where students work with staff to find ways to enhance how their courses are taught.
- Our 'Virtual Students' Union' won the award for best practice in the NUS Student Engagement Awards 2011.



Millennium Point

KEEP UP TO DATE

For the latest news and information relating to Birmingham City University, you can follow us on **Twitter** at **@MyBCU**, using the hashtag **#gobcu** for information particularly relating to new starters.

If you have any queries relating to starting at the University this year, you can tweet us your question, using the same hashtag, and we will aim to respond to you as quickly as possible.

www.bcu.ac.uk



City North Campus

City Centre Campus

There's a rising sense of excitement at the University as the first phase of our City Centre Campus expansion – for art, design and media students – nears completion.

To watch the latest live footage of the site as Phase 1 nears completion, visit: www.bcu.ac.uk/webcam

The new building is set to open its doors this September, alongside our existing facilities in Millennium Point, which is home to our Faculty of Technology, Engineering and the Environment and Birmingham School of Acting.

The opening of Phase 1 will see the creation of a national centre of excellence for the cultural and creative industries – including a new media hub and the UK's newest and most radical design facility.

Our renowned Birmingham Institute of Art and Design (BIAD) will relocate much of its provision to the new site, building on the high-quality facilities already in place to enhance contact and co-operation between students and staff on different courses. The building has been designed around an inner atrium to maximise natural light for our artists and

increase opportunities for students from different courses to meet and share ideas.

Professor Chris O'Neil, Executive Dean of Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, said: "With the opportunity of moving into a purpose-built development, staff and students at BIAD were consulted at an early stage regarding what they wanted to see, and a priority was to provide space for artists from different disciplines to work

together collaboratively.

"We have started with a core of workshops in the centre of the building with studio space around them, and then 'collision space' where students and staff from different courses will see each other to pass the time of day, and exchange thoughts and ideas, allowing our students to experience a more integrated approach."



Making plans for a world-class Conservatoire

The University's Birmingham Conservatoire, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2011, is an important part of ambitious plans to create a world-class cultural hub at the heart of the city. The Conservatoire is due to relocate from its current base in Paradise Circus as part of the wider redevelopment of the area and the design stage of this exciting project is well under way.

To support the Conservatoire's world-class education, this centrally-located landmark building will be fully fitted with purpose-built facilities, while a new 450-seat concert hall is set to be built on the revamped Centenary Way, which will run from Centenary Square to Chamberlain Square.

The move will firmly place the Conservatoire at the cultural heart of Birmingham – alongside iconic modern buildings elsewhere in the city centre, such as the Library of Birmingham and Symphony Hall, as well as heritage landmarks including the Town Hall and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

Head of Birmingham School of Media Professor Philip Thickett added: "We hope that with the three faculties being in such close proximity in future, we'll have more opportunities for what we're calling 'exquisite collisions' between students and staff, and across different courses. So for example, I hope my TV students will be able to help televise shows via webcast for our fashion design students, or stage and theatre design people can come and help with sets for TV productions. When we're all together in one place it will give us the energy and the space to help get these collaborations off the ground."

Birmingham City University is one of the UK's biggest providers of talent to the cultural and creative industries and an important driver of the West Midlands economy. This development will ensure we continue to be well-placed to provide the best training for the creative professionals of the future. Sitting at the centre of the creative community in Eastside – alongside various existing and planned creative businesses and facilities – this centre of excellence will further encourage collaboration between students, staff and industry, positioning Birmingham and the University as a centre of excellence for the sector.

We are also committed to a second phase of development at Eastside which will feature a student support hub and create an even greater 'campus' feel. Phase 2 of this enterprising project will offer rooms and resources to support teaching with plans for a new library, IT space and other student support facilities.

Final piece in health jigsaw

The 2011/12 academic year also saw the opening of the University's brand new £2 million Seacole West teaching wing at the Faculty of Health's City South Campus. New classrooms were provided and specialist facilities installed, including a fully-functional radiography suite and a 3D imaging diagnostic suite which is one of only a small number in the country. As part of the building work, the refectory area was refurbished and opened up, and a new social space and coffee area created.

As a result of this, the University is now able to teach all of its health-related courses on one site, including diagnostic radiography, radiotherapy, speech and language therapy, and foundation degree courses in health and social care which were previously taught at the City North Campus in Perry Barr. The extension is part of the £30 million state-of-the-art Seacole Building where the rest of our health courses were already taught, which was opened in 2006 and won a Built in Quality Award in 2007.

The build was overseen by the Head of the School of Health and Social Care, Stephen Wordsworth. He said: "The University is very proud of the Seacole Building with its contemporary architecture in a

magnificent landscape setting, designed for modern teaching and learning practices.

"This new wing is the icing on the cake of the Seacole Building and brings all the Faculty of Health's teaching facilities and expertise under one roof. The Faculty boasts up-to-date, innovative facilities that simulate the real situations that many health and social care students encounter in their practice. Therefore these resources are essential in providing our students with a hands-on opportunity to develop their skills in a safe and supportive environment."



Seacole Building, City South Campus

Lecturer pioneers online teaching

As senior lecturer for our Networks programmes, Ron Austin has used a variety of innovative techniques to help students gain a deeper understanding of network engineering, tailoring teaching and learning methods to suit their needs.



Ron has pioneered delivering course materials through mobile devices and virtual learning environments, and placing videos and lecture notes online, as well as demonstrations of computer code being written in 'real time'.

He has also developed e-books for the iPad, with embedded video at the appropriate point in the text, helping students to see real-life demonstrations of what they have just read.

While his initial focus was on his own students, Ron has also helped to develop hi-tech teaching aids for other faculties, including an App, designed by colleague Ian Archer from the School of Computing, Telecommunications and Networks, to help students at Birmingham School of the Built Environment to carry out valuations. Another App is also being developed to make it easier for staff to put course materials online.

Ron said: "This could eventually be used by staff on all subjects – the App has been designed so information can be uploaded

easily by anyone, not just those with detailed technical knowledge."

Student Chris Gatt says that having lecturers like Ron makes a real difference.

"We have all been given iPads on loan and Ron developed an App which covers all the content from the modules and has video tutorials. He's a really dedicated lecturer and it's very useful to have all the information available whenever you need it. The videos show lab work, such as how to configure things, and are really helpful."

Chris has enjoyed his time at the University both academically and socially and would encourage people to come and see for themselves how much is on offer. "It's a really good university – there are a lot of different campuses which expands the opportunities available to you and there are loads of activities you can participate in," he says. "You meet people from everywhere."

Chris is working part-time for Vodafone as a network and security engineer. "I did an internship last year and they have offered me a full-time job so the University has

definitely helped me with my career.

"Ron was there for me during my internship as my tutor. He visited me throughout my placement and checked everything was going OK. If I needed anything, he was always there for me."



"Having lecturers like Ron makes a real difference"

FACT

The UK economy requires an average of 110,500 new IT professionals every year (Technology Counts UK)



Putting business knowledge into action

Studying at Birmingham City Business School means more than just obtaining a degree. We have launched a new Professional Development Programme to help students gain extra skills and experience which will help them stand out from the crowd in the job market.

As part of the 'Leadership Challenge' element of the programme, a group of first year students recently worked together to make music and raise money for charity.

The Musikscool event was attended by 29 students, who set out to create a four-track album of songs in one day, and raise as much money from sales of the songs as possible, for the charity Sense, which helps deafblind people.

Students had to use their business acumen to work in teams on different aspects of the project, from writing and performing the songs to establishing finance and costings, marketing and public relations, and team management.

Despite having little musical experience, they raised over £250 and commented that, although the day was daunting, they were really proud of what they achieved, and found that the skills they used and obtained had greatly increased their confidence.

One of the students, Shona Okeke, said: "It was a real learning curve and a really good experience. We managed to create awareness and raised over £200 but it was more about understanding the processes involved. I enjoyed the challenge.

"I want to work with people, ideally with a charity, and the Leadership Challenge got me thinking about that. University is so much more than studying; you have to keep your eyes open for everything that's available and be ready for the challenges ahead.

"My course has also made me realise that the working world is about more than just making money. It's more important to enjoy your job, like I do now."

Shona has made the most of her time at the University and has taken up an administrative role with us as part of her sandwich year.

"I feel like I'm giving something back and I'm learning a lot at the same time," she added.

"The course has a lot of great elements. The lecturers are fantastic and have a lot of experience that they can relay back to the students. The coaching and mentoring modules made me really think outside the box."



Shona Okeke



Collaborative effort pays off

The extra effort Sophie Benson put into her final year project certainly paid off. As she was required to style fashion shoots, she decided to co-create a magazine, FAKE, to feature them in.

The publication was so well-received that no sooner had Sophie finished the pilot edition, she began work on a second copy and has never looked back. FAKE is now stocked in the Ikon Gallery and other venues in Birmingham, as well as Edinburgh, York, Oxford and Manchester, with plans to expand to London.

Sophie now works as Co-Editor and Fashion Director of FAKE, and leads shoot production and other production aspects, while working on fashion shoots for a range of clients as a freelance stylist.

She credits her time at the University, studying BA (Hons) Fashion Design, with giving her career direction and invaluable skills.

"When I turned up to the University's Open Day, I instantly felt at home," she says. "The first year of the course gave us all the basic skills you need such as pattern cutting and design. It really helped me to understand the garments. You put together a shoot to showcase your work and that made me realise I wanted to work as a stylist.

"Now, as well as continuing to produce FAKE, I do editorials for magazines and commercial work. If I hadn't gone to university, I wouldn't have known what I wanted to do. It's been great – hard work but good fun."

Sophie still has links with the University and has returned as a specialist lecturer on a styling module for second years.

Academic nominated for top award



A senior lecturer from Birmingham School of the Built Environment was recognised for his innovative teaching when he was shortlisted for a Times Higher Education (THE) Award in 2012.

Matthew Smith, Course Director of BSc (Hons) Real Estate, was nominated in the 'Most Innovative Teacher of the Year' award category, following his work at Birmingham City University where he introduced a 'toolkit' of innovations to help boost the learning experience of students.

Matthew has applied a decade of experience and working in partnership with his students to develop a sophisticated set of bespoke teaching innovations directly relating to the nature of the construction sector, including iPhone Apps, interactive seminars and electronic certificates.

Matthew said: "I was really pleased to have won the Students' Union's Extra Mile Award for

the Most Engaging Teacher earlier in the year and this spurred me on to apply for the THE Awards. So to be recognised by both my students and my peers in the same year is very pleasing indeed.

"Students are the most important part of the learning experience and it is only by working as a partner with them that I can continue to positively influence their learning in a way that will go with them into industry."

Now in their eighth year, the Times Higher Education Awards are a highlight of the academic calendar and a celebration of the best in UK higher education.



"First class" teaching

BSc (Hons) Real Estate student Joe Shorney came to Birmingham City University to enhance his chances of progressing in his chosen career and, as part of the course, he is taught by Matthew Smith in the areas of valuation and development appraisal – the process of analysing the financial viability of a project by balancing short-term expenditure against long-term income.

He said: "I work for a chartered surveying firm and my ambition is to progress through the property industry, and ultimately run my own company – and to reach the top in this industry you do need the status that comes with this kind of qualification.

"Matthew has been first class – he's very fair, he makes time for everyone, and his teaching and assessment techniques are always interesting and innovative.

"As part of our assessment we have random mini-tests which keep you on your toes as you're constantly required to keep up to date with your notes in case you have a test. We're also assessed through formal exams or more informal coursework tasks which is great because it gives students who may not be so good at exams other ways to show what they can do.

"For one piece of coursework, we had to create an Excel-based toolkit capable of doing development appraisals – this was quite challenging in terms of how we put it together and a lot different to just writing a standard essay, while it was also something that had real-life applications in the field we work in."

Birmingham School of Media student lands top PR prize

A Birmingham City University student has been announced as The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Midlands Student of the Year.

BA (Hons) Media and Communication student Lucy Hird, 25, from Moseley, was the seventh consecutive student from the University to win the award from the CIPR – the industry's professional body which promotes excellence in PR and communications across the UK.

Judges made the decision based on Lucy's final year campaign project as part of her Media and Communication degree course at Birmingham School of Media, part of Birmingham City University.

Lucy's 'Beauty Recycled' campaign promotes sustainability in the world of beauty by encouraging beauty salons in Birmingham to recycle their waste in a bid to reduce the city's carbon footprint.

The judges from the CIPR Midlands Committee praised Lucy's work for having a clear brand identity and for launching a campaign that has a captivating concept with a website that is being widely used.

Peter Wilby, Lecturer in Public Relations at Birmingham City University, said: "I am delighted that Lucy has been announced as this year's winner. Alongside launching and managing her campaign, Lucy organised a PR conference at the University with an audience of professionals, academics and students in PR and media from across the Midlands. This was also a huge success."

Beauty salons and spas who wish to join the 'Beauty Recycled' campaign can do so by visiting www.beautyrecycled.org where they can request an information pack on how to recycle within their workplace.

Lucy received her prize at a CIPR awards ceremony in November 2012.

FACT



Our students have won the CIPR Midlands Student of the Year award every year since 2006

Providing OpportUNity for our students

When you arrive at university, you may well be looking for part-time work to earn money and develop skills and experience that you can use in your future career.

At Birmingham City University, we have launched a new initiative to help our students do just that – it's called 'OpportUNITY: Student Jobs on Campus' and it has been created to help you find paid part-time jobs with the University in a variety of different roles.

All students have the opportunity to sign up to the scheme and start applying for jobs on campus

as soon as they join us. You will be invited to tell us about any skills you have and we can use that information to match you to jobs when they become available. As of January 2013, almost 300 students have been employed in 40 different roles around the University.

One of the main advantages of getting involved in OpportUNITY is that the support we offer does

not stop once you have successfully secured a position. Under the scheme, you will receive feedback at every stage of your employment experience, from help with your interview technique or CV writing to support in developing skills related to your role.

We have developed a list of 22 key employability skills in consultation with organisations including the Confederation of British Industry and the National Union of Students. You will receive regular feedback from your line managers, who will be expected to provide evidence of the skills you gain as time goes on, helping you to articulate your employability to future employers.

The scheme has been designed to help you succeed, not only in your time here, but also when applying for jobs in the future. Getting a part-time job on campus not only gives you an extra income and allows you to meet and work with different people, but it also helps you gain experience and develop the skills that employers are looking for.

The University's Director of Human Resources, Angela Pocock, said: "We have an excellent track record at Birmingham City University of partnership work between staff and students. I was already working on an initiative to develop an in-house temporary agency and we realised we could develop that to support students in a broader way, as well as meet the University's temporary staffing needs."

Luke Millard, our Head of Learning Partnerships, added: "The creation of student employment opportunities will enhance creativity and responsiveness across our university and we believe it will significantly improve the student experience through greater student engagement. The employability skills of our students will be stretched and developed as we ask them to lead, manage and communicate within the jobs they perform."

"Evidence in the USA, from our partners at Northwest Missouri State University, suggests that students develop a greater sense of belonging to a university when they also work within it."



LLB (Hons) Law student Orjeta Neli won an iPad in a prize draw organised for students who registered on the scheme at the start of the 2012/13 academic year. She is pictured here with University Director of HR Angela Pocock, Recruitment Manager for Temporary Staff Sharmin Hussain and Recruitment Administrator Mahmudah Begum.



BA (Hons) English student **Georgina Shackell Green** joined the University's Marketing department as a Student Copywriter, assisting with the production of written content for a wide variety of outlets including the prospectus, University website and staff magazine.

Working under the guidance of the University's in-house copywriter, Georgina has been responsible both for sourcing information and writing it up into the required format, helping her to build valuable experience in the techniques of gathering information and writing to a required format, length and style.

Georgina said: "This has been a really interesting experience. I've always enjoyed writing so it's been great to be able to use it in a professional way!"



BA (Hons) Business Law and Human Resource Management student **Nazush Chohan** has been working as an Administrative Assistant for the University's Human Resources (HR) Department since September.

As she aims to work in HR when she graduates, the role has given Nazush a valuable insight into the requirements of working in a busy office environment, as she assists with such areas as employment contracts, filing and payroll.

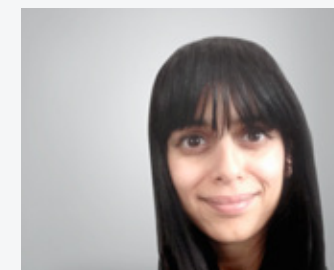
She said: "Everyone in the office has been so friendly and supportive and I was made to feel a part of the team from the day I started. If I've ever had any queries about my job, or even related issues on my course, they've always been happy to help."

FACT

Graduates earn on average £12,000 per year more than non-graduates (Office for National Statistics)

Putting knowledge into action

Meanaz Akhtar was attracted to studying **BA (Hons) Public Sociology** at Birmingham City University because it provided the opportunity to undertake a work placement with a third sector organisation, local agency, think tank or activist group.



Meanaz Akhtar

The University's lecturers encouraged debates which helped to provide rich insights into sociological issues as well as helping to analyse theoretical perspectives in sociology; all building towards getting students to think more sociologically and preparing them for their work placements.

Meanaz is now in her final year after having the chance to work for Involvement Innovation, a training consultancy which aims to improve services for local communities by carrying out consultations, evaluations and analysis with the participation of communities and service users.

"During my time at Involvement Innovation I was tasked with creating promotional materials to endorse the training packages and distributed them to relevant providers within the public, private and volunteer sector," says Meanaz. "My most prominent role within the organisation was supporting on a consultation to identify what the barriers were for local families when attending a local children's centre."

"What was great about taking part in the consultation was being able to feed back the findings at an event staged especially to mark the end of the consultation and invite back participants and professionals who took part."

Meanaz was initially supposed to work with Involvement Innovation for four months, but she ended up staying for an extra month to support the completion of a project that she had been working on throughout her placement.

After completing her degree, Meanaz hopes to continue her studies in this area, undertaking a Master's in Social Research and eventually completing a PhD with a view to carrying out a researcher's role preferably within the voluntary or public sector. This field of work is incredibly important to her and she believes that "public sociology encourages such engagement with wider audiences in order to identify public issues, yet this particular extension of sociology does not intend to come up with the solutions, but empowers the public to take charge of their situation".

FACT

85 per cent of our graduates were in employment or full-time study within six months of graduating (DLHE survey 2010/11)

Concept Factory to help produce next generation of entrepreneurs

The Concept Factory, a new 'thinking space' for enterprising students and graduates, has been launched by Birmingham City University.



The Concept Factory (left) was recently opened by Vice-Chancellor Professor Cliff Allan (right)



It will act as a 'hub' for entrepreneurial activity and a space for like-minded enterprising students and graduates to network, share ideas and form collaborations. They will be able to use the space for a range of professional activities, including business meetings, presentations and brainstorming sessions.

It is hoped that this initiative will help to pave the way for a new generation of entrepreneurs by providing some of the key elements that go into business start-up including advice, mentor support, free training workshops, programmes and networking events.

Students are welcome to drop in and use the space at any time, and they can also call on the University's own experts for specialist help and advice where needed.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Cliff Allan recently unveiled the enterprise zone to a selected list of attendees including successful business owners, proactive enterprising students and graduates.

Guest speakers at the event included University alumna Daniella Genas, founder and CEO of Aspire4u, an events management company which has

helped over 500 young people by providing work experience, training and volunteer opportunities.

Fellow speaker, recent graduate Hilda Burke, formed HBBA Corporate Business Services Ltd – which specialises in tailor-made bookkeeping and accounting solutions for businesses – while still studying her Accounting and Finance degree at the University. Hilda is now looking at establishing a training school to help place accountancy and finance students with local businesses.

Current Media and Communication student Jason Turner also gave a talk on how he founded social enterprise iSore Media, which produces video training workshops for drug rehabilitation support groups.

Ron Brown, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Manager at the University said: "The Concept Factory is available for any student, from any faculty, studying any subject to use, as a good idea can come from anyone.

"We are keen to work with students like Jason to further strengthen what he has created with iSore media, to encourage those that are starting on their business journey and to support our graduates like Daniella and Hilda."

Career KickStart

Our support doesn't end when you leave university, with our Careers and Job Prospects team able to provide help and advice for up to five years after you graduate. We have recently launched a new scheme for graduates, Career KickStart, with careers experts and employers offering guidance on how to find the job you want.

Topics covered on the interactive training course include how to market yourself to employers; how to search and apply for jobs; networking and social media; interview techniques; assessment centres; and business and commercial awareness.

The first event took place last June, with students gaining places on the scheme through a realistic application process. Those who took part also have the option to receive ongoing support from an experienced employer who will act as a supporter while you are applying for work opportunities.

'How To' videos

Our Careers and Job Prospects team provides face to face help and advice to all of our students throughout their time at University and beyond. Now, you can also access their expertise at a time and place to suit you after a series of videos were produced, with information for graduates wanting to get a foot on the careers ladder.

Topics covered include writing a CV, job searching, applications forms, interviews and psychometric testing, as well as how to make the most of your first few weeks in a new job.

The videos are available online at www.bcu.ac.uk/how-to

For more information on employability at Birmingham City University, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/kickstart

Year in industry provides inspiration



After her A Level results did not meet her expectations, Charlotte Powers could have felt downhearted – but she quickly secured a place on the Mechanical Engineering degree at Birmingham City University, which turned out to be a great decision as it incorporated a year's placement in industry, which she spent with aerospace giant Rolls-Royce.

She said the placement gave her a great opportunity to put the skills she had learned into practice, and get a real insight into the requirements of the workplace. She helped design new processes to improve the quality and speed of the manufacturing process – experience she believes will prove invaluable when looking to secure a permanent role in the industry.

She said: "My A Level grades weren't as high as I hoped and so I went through Clearing and chose Birmingham City University, mostly because of its industry links and the attractiveness of the campus.

"I absolutely loved the placement year at Rolls-Royce, which I secured with the help of the Year

in Industry trust. It gave me confidence in my skills and I learned so much. I was working within a team on a whole range of different projects related to manufacturing systems – I worked closely alongside my colleagues to deploy a Manufacturing Execution System and Computer Aided Process Planning into a new facility to improve quality and manufacturing time of components and parts.

"It really lets you see how engineering and business co-exist and makes you stand out from everyone else who is graduating at the same time. You've got to take every opportunity you can to put yourself ahead of the crowd so that you don't struggle as much to get a job after you've finished studying."

Charlotte is now planning on studying a Master's degree, in order to get onto a graduate placement scheme in her field and experience as many different areas of engineering as possible before reaching the level of a qualified Chartered Engineer within five to six years.

Students sell their products direct to the public

Entrepreneurial graduates and current students from the University have been given the chance to sell their designs directly to the public with the opening of a flagship store in the city's prestigious Mailbox shopping and leisure development.

The Birmingham Made Me store was originally due to open for six months from May 2012, but such has been its success that its operation has now been extended by a further six months, and a second store has opened elsewhere in the complex.

Around 30 students have now taken part in the project, selling around £50,000 worth of goods so far, including jewellery, ceramics, home accessories and fashion.

Our ambitious entrepreneurs all share the same vision – that Birmingham, as the 'original design city', is the perfect home for an alternative retail venture, selling a range of creative products and accessories.

Beverley Nielsen, Director of Employer Engagement at the University, said: "We're continuing to trade and do well, and the collective has grown from 12 to 30 students in the time we've been open. We're now looking at several commercial options for these traders to move forward independently.

"The Mailbox has been very supportive of our activities and I'd like to thank them for their tremendous support and in kind contributions to the University.

"For the students, they've had some amazing experiences and have come on tremendously as new entrepreneurs by taking part."

Student gains experience with film industry placement



Our students frequently secure work placements with some of the biggest names in their chosen industry and for Marketing, Advertising and PR student Martina Aleksieva, they do not come much bigger than entertainment giant Warner Bros, the film studio responsible, among other things, for the Harry Potter franchise – the biggest-grossing film series of all time.

She is currently on a placement as a Theatrical Distribution Intern for Eastern Europe. The theatrical distribution department is responsible for the actual delivery of films in different parts of the world, with the regional offices carrying out business analysis on each WB title and using the results to make a decision on whether to release a film in that area.

She said: "My placement will help me in the future in numerous ways. For a start the work experience section of my CV will have a big name – Warner Bros. I have also learned what my weaknesses and strengths are so I can work on improvement. The company also offers many training courses to help develop new skills such

FACT

There will be a need for 31,000 new graduate engineers each year for the next five years to meet projected demand (Institution of Mechanical Engineers, 2011)

as time management, prioritisation and working under pressure which are all attributes I will need for progressing in my future career. Even following a full-time job routine has helped me develop.

"I have had to adapt quickly to working with new people in a foreign environment and networking is also very important to my role. I feel that, by going on placement, I now have an advantage over university peers that decided not to do one, and students who haven't had the chance to experience working for an international company but want to get involved in the industry.

"What I enjoy most is the intensity of the job and how much I learn, not only about the company, but the industry in general. Incentives-wise, the films we get to watch much earlier before their release, the freebies like DVDs, tickets, promo materials and all sorts of discounts. Also, sometimes we get to hear interesting facts from filmmakers meetings and when our VPs visit film sets – which is quite exciting."

Gaining real-life insight through mentoring experience

We know that there is a lot to think about when you first arrive at university which is why, as well as the extensive support available from University staff, we also offer you the chance to learn from those who have been there and done it.

We offer dedicated mentoring for students and graduates, which sees support offered face to face and by email, to help with settling into university life and in planning for your future career.

Ask@BCU online peer mentoring offers you the chance to gain help and advice from experienced students as you settle into university life. Our mentors can help you in such areas as finding on and off-campus support services, offering advice on your work, study and social life balance, and explaining unfamiliar University processes and procedures.

Ask@BCU online employer mentoring gives you the opportunity to learn about the world of work through direct access to big-name employers, and alumni who are pursuing successful careers in their chosen fields. Our mentors are able to offer help with exploring possible career options, support in developing your employability skills, and preparation for the world of work, including expanding your network of contacts.

Both of these schemes are run in partnership with education charity Brightside, and were shortlisted for a Times Higher

Education (THE) Award in the 'Outstanding Support for Students' category in 2011. Find out more about these schemes by visiting www.askbcu.org.

The **Inspiring Futures** professional mentoring scheme is a partnership between Birmingham City University and Birmingham Future, a membership organisation for young professionals in the city, designed to give you a chance to find out what it is really like to enter employment after you complete your studies. It brings together penultimate and final year students with working professionals based in the West Midlands and is fully accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

It offers the chance to improve your CV, application form and interview techniques and develop skills that will help you in the workplace, including communications skills, problem solving and the ability to meet deadlines. It also helps you to gain a greater understanding of your chosen industry and the jobs available, and expand your professional network.

Smoothing the path to university

Our Birmingham School of Media worked with its students to develop a summer online learning and engagement programme, Level Up, to help bridge the gap between college and university for new arrivals. Students can log on before they start their course to find out more about the School, get to know other people on their course and take part in activities to give them an introduction to academic study.

The project materials were designed by Dr Kerry Gough and Dr Simon Barber from the School, and had two main purposes; the first was preparing students academically for arrival at university and introducing them to degree level work, and the second was to introduce them to the social side of student life within the School.

Kerry developed two websites to fulfil these aims; one through the University's online learning site Moodle as the basis for the development of the academic skills the students would need, and a separate website to act as a general introduction to Birmingham School of Media.

The Level Up project really helped students acclimatise to university life and work and has generated wide spread interest across the University. This has encouraged additional funding for Level Up 2.0, which will expand the programme to students in other faculties.

Kerry said: "Through Level Up, we have sought to set the standard for collaborative working relationships prior to the new students' arrival at Birmingham City University and upon their entry to the School.

"The ambition here is to ensure that barriers between staff and students are eliminated in a

way that encourages creative partnerships from the outset and sets the first impression of our faculty as one which wants to work alongside our students in partnership to achieve common goals."



The Level Up mentors. Picture by Ellie Gibbons

Alessandra (right) and Charlotte celebrate receiving their scholarship

Student lands scholarship from advertising guru

Alessandra Scala's time at the University has helped her to focus on a future career path and develop her creativity.

Her talents were recognised by advertising guru Trevor Beattie who has awarded her a bursary to support her studies and a paid month's internship at his London agency Beattie McGuinness Bungay.

From the 20 students who entered for the bursary, six were shortlisted and invited down to the agency to present their work before the final decision was made. Alessandra and her friend and fellow student Charlotte Brown, who both studied BA (Hons) Visual Communication, were delighted to receive the scholarship. They are part of a copywriter and art director team called AC Creatives, and the bursary awarded was £3,000 to the creative team which was split half way.

Alessandra, who specialises in fashion photography, says: "It definitely changed my career direction. I wanted to do advertising but wasn't sure if my course could lead to that so it really helped me see the potential and it's definitely something I'd like to do in the future."

She graduates this year and says her experiences at the University have proved invaluable, while she has also made strong friendships.

"I have managed to build my own style of photography and have had a lot of support from my tutors. You learn so much and it has really helped both my technical ability and self-development.

"I was a bit shy when I first came to the University but it really has been one of the best experiences. You make so many different friends and you inspire each other. It's such a creative university and you get so much out of it."





Improving the student experience

Student satisfaction is of paramount importance to us and we are committed to regularly consulting with our students to ensure we are meeting their needs at all times.

The University's dedication to improving the student experience is illustrated by our award-winning student engagement, our close links with business and industry and our planned £180 million investment in new facilities.

Every year the National Student Survey (NSS) allows us to monitor how well we are performing in a variety of areas, and respond to any issues in a quick and effective manner. For example, as a result of previous feedback from students we have introduced Fairtrade products into our cafes, extended our library opening hours during peak times and upgraded the internet service in halls of residence.

This year, the University is aiming to raise £10,000 for charity by making a £2 donation to three charities chosen by the Students' Union – the Acorns Children's Hospice Trust, Birmingham Children's Hospital and the Alzheimer's Society – for every student that completes the survey.

We futureproof our graduates

We don't just prepare our graduates for employment – we ensure they are ready to enter employment at the level their skills deserve. That's why we've been rated as one of the UK's top 30 universities for getting students into graduate-level jobs for the last three years, according to the Sunday Times University Guide.

We are never afraid to innovate

Students in the Faculty of Technology, Engineering and the Environment (TEE) were the first in the UK to be given iPhones to help them learn outside of the lecture theatre in partnership with mobile phone giant O2.

Students from the Faculty of Health are being given access to an innovative clinical space to practise their skills in a safe and supportive environment outside of lecture time. Skills Practice and Clinical Enhancement (SPACE) has over 60 clinical skills procedures available.

The School of Law has been nationally recognised for its efforts to implement e-learning across a number of sectors, including its Virtual Solicitors' Office, as part of our virtual learning environment 'Shareville', shortlisted in three categories for the E-Learning Awards 2011.

Our facilities enhance the student experience

The University was rated as one of the top 10 in the country for spending on facilities in both 2012 and 2013 by the independent Complete University Guide.

Major investments in our estate include a two-stage expansion of our City Centre Campus, a major refurbishment of our City South Campus and a new sports centre at our City North Campus, bringing our total spending to around £180 million.

We offer outstanding student support

The University has eight libraries with almost one million print and electronic books and over 30,000 print and electronic journals.

Our Careers and Job Prospects service, offers impartial advice and support to current students and graduates for up to five years after they leave.

Our students are partners

Teaching is the number one priority for the University and we are never afraid to innovate with new, exciting techniques. Students are now 'partners' in their learning experience, with our Student Academic Partners (SAP) scheme seeing students and staff teaming up on projects to find new and innovative ways of improving their University experience.

National Student Survey results



Highlights of our 2012 National Student Survey (NSS) results:

- Overall satisfaction increased for the second year running
- 83% of students were satisfied with their course
 - 87% agreed staff were good at explaining things
 - 86% said staff were enthusiastic about what they taught
 - 85% said they had the IT resources they needed
 - 84% said the library services met their needs

Making the most of the chances on offer

Harriet Townrow wasn't sure what she wanted to study when she decided to go to university, but the **BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy** course appealed to her as soon as she read about it.

"I didn't know anything about radiotherapy before I started; I was flicking through the prospectus and it seemed interesting. I went and spent a day in a radiotherapy department and that made me decide to apply," she says.

"The course has been challenging but I have enjoyed it. I found it a big adjustment at first because it's half work placement so I went from studying to working effectively full time. It has been a massive benefit though because I have realised the commitment involved, what to expect at work and what is expected of you.

"I have been based at New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton and I love it there. Because you are there throughout your course, you make friends and become part of the team. I have learned a lot from my course and placements, particularly about communicating with people."

Harriet has also enjoyed a great social life through the University. "Although I have to work hard I have enjoyed the usual nights out and spending time at the Students' Union. I have made a lot of friends from different courses; I think living in halls of residence in my first year really helped with that."

Harriet has an excellent relationship with course staff, particularly her tutor. "We were allocated a tutor in our first year who is there for you throughout your studies. She has been brilliant; I can text or email any time with any problem or concern and she is always there for me."

FACT



95% of students on medical technology courses were satisfied with their experience (NSS 2012)

Honouring our greatest graduates

At Birmingham City University, you will be provided with the help, support and expertise you need to succeed, as proved by the number of our former students who go on to record outstanding achievements in the local, national or international community. We have just honoured five such students with the title of Alumni of the Year, with all of them officially receiving the honour at our graduation ceremonies in February and March.



Daniella Genas, who studied BA (Hons) Media and Communication and MA Media Enterprise, has successfully combined business acumen with a social conscience at Birmingham-based event management company Aspire4u – where all profits are re-invested in the Aspire4u Community Interest Company which organises a range of exciting and innovative projects to provide work experience for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Daniella organised her first events while still a student at the University, going on to set up Aspire4u in 2007. A year later, she returned to study a Master’s degree in Media Enterprise, adding practical business knowledge to the event management skills she already possessed.

She said: “My time at the University was a big help in getting where I am today, not just in terms of the practical experience but also the career and personal development modules we did as part of the MA, and setting up my own personal action plan which has been a superb help in terms of setting my goals.”



Jon Riche turned his hobby of making films into a successful career after completing his studies at the University. He has directed music videos for various artists including Kasabian, Just Jack, Moby and The Feeling, as well as commercials for well-known brands including Nissan, Ikea and Nike. He has worked with friend Spencer Jones to form the comedy collective ‘Broken Biscuits’, writing and directing the BAFTA-nominated show ‘Big Babies’ on children’s TV channel CBBC.

He chose to study BA (Hons) Visual Communication at Birmingham City University because it allowed him to try out different disciplines and it was while he was on that course that he made the decision that he wanted to become a director, and began learning the technical skills he needed before branching out on his own.

“You just have to look at where I started and where I am now to see what you can do if you believe in yourself and go for it. I’ve had my ups and downs, I’ve lost jobs, been through recessions, had good years and bad years, but I’m still here and still doing what I love.”



Neil Edginton, who studied BSc (Hons) Environmental Planning and MSc Construction Project Management, has played an integral role in many of the exciting new developments that have changed Birmingham’s skyline in recent years, as part of the team behind such iconic buildings as Fort Dunlop, The Mailbox and The Cube.

He then set up his own company, EDG Property, which is currently involved in redeveloping The Clock Tower, a listed former adult education centre in Birmingham, into several premium restaurants, a cookery school and a handful of apartments.

He said: “I genuinely think that the University course gave me a thorough grounding for life in the property world. I also gained so many life skills around how to mix with different people and work successfully together, which is what you need when you go into the workplace.”



Nigel Hanson has helped scores of young people develop their potential and raise their aspirations through the sport of basketball since establishing Birmingham A’s Basketball Club in 2003. As a local resident and former professional basketball player in the late 80s and early 90s, Nigel identified with the issues faced by young people in his community and decided to provide them with opportunities to get involved in sport through volunteering.

After completing a law degree at Birmingham City University in 2003, Nigel went on to enjoy a successful legal career but his passion for using sport for social change never went away and he now works full time developing the club, as well as acting as an independent adviser and peer reviewer to the Home Office’s Ending Youth and Gang Violence programme.

“I see people turn their lives around every day including the students from Birmingham City University that come and work with us, in addition to those taking part as beneficiaries. Some go all the way from not having a job to going through education and gaining employment. For some it may be about developing self esteem and for others it may be about gaining skills but we aim to create opportunities for all and help young people whomever they are or whatever their background realise their true potential.”



Emma Shipley is an exceptionally talented and creative textile designer and illustrator who has already achieved great things in the four years since she graduated from the University with a degree in Textile Design. She has won a number of awards for her work, which has been described as ‘astonishingly skilful and distinctive’, and has received international acclaim.

Her wallpaper collaboration with unique fashion and homeware store Anthropologie had just launched in the US and UK and includes designs based on the theme of time travel. Emma has also been working as a print, material and colour consultant for Jaguar Land Rover, working on innovative design projects.

“It’s important that you remain true to your own creativity. When you are a student you may worry about future employment and being commercial but you should focus on your own style. I wouldn’t have imagined collaborating with Jaguar Land Rover but they saw something in my designs which resonated with them; you never know what opportunities may come your way.”



Student group promotes creativity

Adrian Earle’s creativity and drive spurred him on to found Paperball, a student collective with an eclectic mix of talent.

Made up of writers, artists and directors, the group meets regularly to share ideas and plan experimental cultural and creative projects, as well as organise events such as poetry nights and workshops.

“We want to use our time at university, and the resources that are around us, to start creating and collaborating while we have this safety net,” said Adrian. “We can be really innovative; we specialise in literature and creating it in other accessible art forms.

“Paperball brings together talent from different courses and year groups and when people leave the University, they know that there is a community available that will always be welcoming to them and support them.

“It also means that there will be some models in place for when we graduate, and networks are being formed. I would love to stay on as a director and producer in Paperball in the future.”

BA (Hons) English student Adrian says the support from the University has been invaluable. “We have meetings on campus and the University has massively embraced it. The staff can see how much work we put in and how much we do.

“My friends at other universities are impressed at how we’ve managed to do this so quickly and the help we’ve had. If you put in the work, they double the effort.”

Adrian is passionate about creative writing and film, and says his course has developed his knowledge and enthusiasm. He is also a mentor to first and second year students and representative for his course, roles he enjoys very much.

Taking the road to the Rovers

Catherine Tyldesley is one of the most recognisable faces to have graduated from Birmingham School of Acting (BSA) in recent years, having played Eva Price in Coronation Street since June 2011.

Catherine performed with various theatre groups as a child and teenager but chose to get formal training before embarking on a professional career. She visited a number of acting schools, but says it was BSA that stood out.

As well as giving her the training and support she needed, it provided a massive boost to the early stages of her career when she was signed up by an agent after one of our Showcase events, where students perform a range of pieces on stage in front of agents, casting directors and theatre producers.

She said: "I came down for the audition and I learned so much on that day, I thought just imagine what I'd learn in three years. The tuition we received was absolutely outstanding – so many of our tutors had worked in the acting

business all their lives and, as I've learned since then, as an actor you learn on the job so to have the benefit of their experience was amazing for all of us."

She went on to secure parts in such popular series as Holby City, The Royal, Emmerdale and Shameless, and her first starring role in the 1920s-set BBC drama Lilies, before landing the role of Eva, which Catherine said was a dream come true for her.

Catherine added: "I was absolutely ecstatic to get the part because I'm from Manchester, I had friends in the show already and most importantly I was a massive fan. I grew up with Coronation Street and to be part of such a legendary show is so amazing that I miss it when I'm not there."



Sweet treats are a hit in the world of fashion

A measure of the success we have in giving our graduates the entrepreneurial skills they need to succeed is the number of them who go on to run their own successful businesses. Talented designer Sarah Warner is currently making her mark on the UK fashion scene, with the opening of her own studio in Birmingham.

She created the Bits and Bows brand, specialising in made to measure clothing, handmade jewellery and accessories. Having initially based herself in the Mr Birds Emporium retail development, she has recently set up her own independent studio in the Custard Factory, home to many independent creative businesses.

Her unique sweet-themed creations have already caught the eye of the media, with her designs featuring in publications including Bliss, Shout, More and Girl Talk, and one of her rings being worn by Cher Lloyd during an appearance on The X Factor.

She said: "I had heard a lot of great things about the fashion courses at the University. Recommendations from friends and online encouraged me to apply, and

when I had my interviews I realised it was where I truly wanted to be. The mix of creative students gave the University a great artistic buzz, and it's a very inspiring place to work."

After graduating from the University's BA (Hons) Fashion Design course in 2009, Sarah took on a role as a manager and visual merchandiser for Next. She stayed there for 18 months, before deciding to take the plunge and enter self-employment.

She added: "Customers can book in to get measured up, browse fabrics and shop till they drop! I have lots of exciting plans for the future, and also have eight stockists for my jewellery within the UK and plan on reaching double figures by the end of the year."



Graduate launches successful music career

Chris Budd's career got off to a flying start on leaving the University with a **BSc (Hons) Sound Engineering and Production** degree, entering the music industry and barely stopping since.

For most who have studied at university, graduation day holds special memories – a proud day, celebrating your achievements with family and friends. For Chris, there's another reason to remember it – he ended his, not on a night out in Birmingham, but on a flight to Colombia for a gig, then onto the Big Apple to sign his first US record deal.

"When I was invited on nights out, I just had to say 'Sorry, I can't – I'm off to Colombia.' It was a case of cap and gown off, and straight to the airport in a taxi," he said.

Now holding job titles of 'producer, percussionist, remixer, songwriter, engineer and session musician' – all at the same time – Chris has toured the world, written songs for a number of top artists (including Alexandra Burke and Flo Rida) and even had a top 10 solo record of his own. Not bad, considering the graduation celebration he left early was happening less than five years ago.

Already touring before he arrived, Chris used his time at university to continue building his experience and technical knowledge.

He added: "I was virtually working full time by my final year anyway, so when I left I continued the momentum and spent the next year all over the world. I've been lucky enough to play with a lot of artists I really look up to."



Laura recognised as exciting new talent

A graduate from Birmingham Conservatoire has been recognised as one of this year's most exciting new artists.

Laura Mvula graduated with a degree in Composition in 2008 and has gone on to put her skills to work in the music industry. Her talent was recently acknowledged by over 200 UK-based music critics, broadcasters and bloggers, who placed her fourth in the BBC's 'Sound of 2013' list. Artists recognised in the 'Sound of' lists in previous years include Florence and the Machine, Jessie J, Adele and Dizzee Rascal.

Laura was also nominated for the prestigious Critics' Choice Award at the 2013 BRIT Awards – won by Tom Odell. Laura said: "It's such an iconic thing. To be recognised at all by the BRITs is immense and to be associated with them is a dream."

Speaking of her time as a Composition student, Laura added: "When I arrived at Birmingham Conservatoire I was very shy and really unsure of where I wanted to go musically. Being around a lot of excited musicians who were happy to be doing what they're doing was an amazing experience."



Birmingham: Student city, global city, investment city

Join us at Birmingham City University and you will not only be joining an innovative and forward-thinking institution - you will also be living and working in one of Europe's most lively and vibrant cities.

Home to over one million people, including some 65,000 students, Birmingham offers a fascinating history and heritage, a world-class cultural scene – and incredible nightlife and shopping.

Birmingham is a global city with a strong history of forging international links. At the moment, some 875 international businesses are operating in Birmingham (source: Marketing Birmingham), with investors including Indian industrial giant Tata, owners of Jaguar Land Rover, and China's SAIC Motor, which has revived the historic MG sports car brand.

Over the past 60 years, the ethnic makeup of the city has become increasingly diverse with immigration from around the world, particularly the Indian sub-continent, Africa and the Caribbean, further strengthening its links with communities across the globe.

Its friendly population is what makes Birmingham the dynamic, multicultural city that is – and also one of the largest cities in Europe offering a heady mix of galleries, music, restaurants and bars.

Birmingham's physical environment has been transformed over the last 30 years, with new developments such as the National Exhibition Centre, the International Convention Centre, Brindleyplace and the new Bullring shopping centre. However, the city is not standing still and further investment in its infrastructure includes a new £188 million library, the £600 million transformation of Birmingham New Street Station and a £128 million expansion of the city's tram network.

Much of this redevelopment is part of the £10 billion Big City Plan, which sets out how the centre of Birmingham will be enhanced over a 20-year period. This includes the multi-billion pound regeneration of Eastside, in which the University is playing a major part with its expanded City Centre Campus.



The Mailbox



Library of Birmingham

An oasis on our doorstep

New milestones are being reached all the time during our City Centre Campus development, with the opening of the adjacent Eastside City Park recently providing cause for celebration.

The park – the first new public urban park in the city for 130 years – will be right on the doorstep of our City Centre Campus, providing both an outside space for students to enjoy and a setting for future events.

Work began in August 2011, with the site being formally opened in December last year. Covering some 6.75 acres, it features landscaped green space with over 300 trees, a 188 metre canal and a public square with 21 jet fountains.

It will be lit up 24 hours a day, with the aim of ensuring it is well-used around the clock and is safe for all park users. It will also be closely monitored by CCTV cameras and has been assigned two designated park keepers.

The park will provide a focal point for one of the biggest urban renewal schemes in Europe, with 420 acres of former industrial land surrounding the City Centre Campus having been designated as the city's learning and technology quarter, with a multi-billion pound investment in new buildings and facilities.

Project director Peter Cochrane said: "The wider redevelopment of Eastside will bring the city centre much closer to us, which will bring advantages in terms of business engagement, access to social and welfare services, and retail and leisure opportunities. At the moment we're on the cusp of the central core, but that core is growing and moving towards us."

Other measures designed to enhance the attractiveness of the new city centre development include the restoration and refurbishment of the listed Moby Dick pub – which will revert to its original name of the Eagle and Ball – and the opening up of the adjacent canal.

Attending the opening ceremony for the park, Professor Cliff Allan, Vice-Chancellor at Birmingham City University, said: "This is an important and proud milestone for all Eastside stakeholders – but it is particularly exciting for Birmingham City University.

"This new City Park provides superb open space which fully integrates our flagship buildings with the rest of this fast-changing district."



Eastside City Park. Photo by Timothy Soar.

There's so much more at your Students' Union!

There is a long established urban myth about students' unions, that we're just the place to come to when you want cheap drinks. But the real truth about your Students' Union here at Birmingham City University, is that we're about much, much more!

The first time you'll properly get to know your Students' Union, is just before you come to the University, when we launch our Freshers (it's what new students are known as) web pages and tempt you with the fantastic entertainment programme that we host, designed to ease you into university life the fun way. We'll also send you a brand spanking new Freshers booklet, packed full of hints and tips about being a Fresher and what your Students' Union can do for you.

Our Freshers' Fair gets bigger and better every year, attended by hundreds of representatives from the University, local and national companies, your Students' Union and our sports teams and societies, all trying to get you accustomed to the university way of life.

Although at first you'll just think of your Students' Union as being all about Freshers, please be aware that we should be a major part of your life throughout your time here! We not only continue our varied and exciting entertainments programme (that you will come to love during Freshers) throughout the academic year, we're also here to help you with the following:

- Become more employable through our many workshops, seminars and practical sessions.
- Advise you with any issues you may have with your assignments, personal life, housing or anything where you may need extra help and support.
- Campaign on your behalf if you wish to see change within the Union or University.
- Provide you with the opportunity to participate in a wide range (almost 200) of sports and societies, ranging from rugby and hockey to fashion and yoga, and allow you to compete competitively against other universities.
- Feed you delicious and purse and wallet-friendly food, from our cafes and lounges.
- Find your perfect student home through our very own lettings agency.
- Provide you with the opportunity to volunteer in many local and national projects, which will look great on your CV.
- Show you how to enjoy Birmingham as the great student city that it is! We'll show you the best places to enjoy nights out, to eat, to shop and the many cultural sights that only exist in this great, great city.
- And more than anything, we'll be that one extra friend that you can always count on to help you whenever you need us!

So there you have it... the Students' Union has plenty to offer you, not only in your first weeks at university but throughout your time here.



Tom's Top Tips

I know there's a lot to think about in your first few weeks at university. Fortunately, there's lots of support on hand to help you settle in. Here are some of the most important things to remember when you first arrive.



01

Get involved

Make the most of your time with us and find out about all the opportunities available to you at Birmingham City University - not only are they fun but a lot of them allow you to meet new people, make new friends, help develop your skills and make you more employable.

www.bcsu.com

02

Team up with a student mentor

Being mentored by another student is a great way to learn the ropes at university, settle into university living and make friends for life.

www.bcu.ac.uk/mentoring

03

Sort out your finances

Apply for your student funding early. If you do experience difficulties, talk to us about emergency funding and hardship funds.

www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/finance

05

Receive support for your disability

Get information about Disabled Students' Allowance funding, extra time in exams or how you get screened for dyslexia.

www.bcu.ac.uk/disability-support

06

Register with the Doctor

As soon as you arrive, register with the University's healthcare provider or with a GP in your area.

www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/doctor

04

Develop a work/study/life balance

Stay in control, maintain your health and wellbeing and ensure life doesn't get on top of you.

www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/health

08

Work while studying

Not only does this give you a bit more money but it can also help you develop skills and become more employable when you graduate. We employ students to work at the University through our very own employment project, OpportUNITY - Student Jobs on Campus.

www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/health-and-wellbeing

07

Get employability advice

Whether you decide to work while you study or you just want to improve your CV and develop your job searching skills, our team can give you the guidance you need.

www.bcu.ac.uk/careers

09

Be a part of the University community

Whatever you decide to study with us it's a great idea to find out about the rest of the university, we have six faculties spread over eight campuses for you to explore, and as a student you have access to them all.

www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us



Your application – what happens now?

Application deadlines

You may have already submitted your application by the 15 January on-time deadline but if you are still putting yours together, don't panic – Birmingham City University will continue to accept applications for most of our courses until the UCAS main cycle closes on 30 June.

However, some popular courses may well fill up earlier, so it's best to get your application in as soon as you can. Once you have completed your application, the next stage will be to reply to the offers you receive.

Accepting or declining offers

After submitting your application to Birmingham City University, we will either make a decision based on your application form and predicted grades, or invite you to an interview or audition before deciding. We will then make a conditional offer (a guaranteed place provided you meet certain conditions, usually exam results), an unconditional offer (if you have already met all the conditions), or inform you that your application has been unsuccessful. Depending

on the course you've applied to, you may be invited to an Applicant Visit Day. This day is designed to provide you with more information about your course and Birmingham City University.

You reply to your offers through Track on the UCAS website once you have received decisions from all of your universities or colleges. Once the universities or colleges have all informed UCAS of their decision, UCAS will contact you, asking you to select your firm and insurance choices.

If you are waiting for decisions but you are no longer interested in these choices, you can withdraw them in Track and then reply to the offers you have already received.

You will need to reply to each offer in one of the following ways:

- Your **firm acceptance** is your first choice for where you want to study which may be unconditional or conditional (if it is conditional, you may also select one insurance choice). All other offers should be declined.
- Your **insurance choice** may be conditional or unconditional, and it is the university or

college you are agreeing to attend if you do not meet the conditions of your firm choice. Therefore, it is usual to select a course with lower entry requirements than your firm choice.

- You can only accept a maximum of one firm and one insurance offer and must **decline** the others – although if you wish, you may decline all of your offers and seek an alternative place.

What options are available to me at this stage?

UCAS Extra

If you do not receive any offers, or if you decline all the offers you receive, you can make an additional choice between February and July through UCAS Extra. You can use the UCAS website to check which courses still have places and apply for one course at a time, but if you do not receive an offer from the course you apply to, you may then make another application (time permitting). If you do

accept an offer, you are committed to taking up that place, provided you meet any conditions.

Clearing

Clearing starts on 1 July for those who apply to UCAS after the main cycle closes on 30 June, but most students will use it when they receive their exam results in mid-August. It is designed for anyone not holding the offer of a place (either because they did not meet their conditions, they did not receive any offers, they declined them all or they applied late) to be matched with remaining vacancies.

You will need to look at the UCAS website for a list of courses which have vacancies and then contact the university or college directly. Admissions staff will often make an offer on the phone straight away, and give the student a certain period of time to decide whether to accept it.

Adjustment

Adjustment is a process for applicants who have exceeded the conditions of their original offer and wish to hold their unconditional firm place while investigating other course options available to them.

If you are eligible to use this process, you must register on the UCAS website, and contact university and college admissions departments directly to discuss vacancies – they are not listed on the UCAS site as Adjustment vacancies but they will be the same courses on offer in Clearing. If you are offered an alternative place and accept it, you will be giving up your original confirmed place and any additional terms associated with it (eg guaranteed accommodation), but if you do not find an alternative place, you will retain the offer from your first choice.

Of course, even if you have exceeded your offer you may not wish to use Adjustment –

there will have been reasons why you made your first choice and this may still be the right course for you. The most competitive courses may not have places available at this stage.

The period in which you may be eligible for the Adjustment process is limited to five days between 15 and 31 August 2013. Your five-day period will start on 15 August, or the point that your conditional firm choice changes to unconditional firm, whichever is the later.

Adjustment cannot be used to change an insurance choice.

Delaying entry

If you accept our offer but then decide you would like to join us the following year instead, perhaps because you want to take time out to travel etc, you must contact us to seek a deferral until the following year. If you want to apply to a different course or institution, you will need to start a new application, as UCAS cannot re-use applications in subsequent years. Applicants who choose to defer must still meet any conditions of offer by 31 August of the cycle in which they apply, ie you would be holding an unconditional firm offer for the following year.

Stay up to date

UCAS has detailed information about the application process on its website at www.ucas.ac.uk. For updates on UCAS Extra, if you are on Twitter you can use the hashtag **#ucasextra** to find out the latest news from UCAS and fellow students. During Clearing, the hashtag **#ucasclearing** performs the same role. Alternatively, Clearing information is posted on the Birmingham City University website at www.bcu.ac.uk and through our own social media channels.



Time to apply for student finance

Anyone planning to start a full-time course at university or college in 2013/14 can apply now for student finance. You do not need to have a confirmed place – you can use your first choice of course and change it online at a later date if you need to.

The main student finance package consists of tuition fee loans, maintenance loans and maintenance grants. There is also extra funding for medical, social work and teacher training courses, and students with special circumstances (for example if you are disabled or have children).

Tuition fee loans are available for both full-time and part-time students. Loans are paid directly to your university or college and only have to be paid back once you are in work and earning over a certain amount (currently £21,000 per year).

Maintenance loans and grants are designed to assist you with living costs, such as food and accommodation. Grants do not have to be paid back, whereas maintenance loans are repaid in the same way as tuition fee loans. If you do not earn over the threshold, you do not have to make any payments, and any remaining balance after 30 years is written off.

These arrangements apply to students from England; if you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, you can find out the arrangements that apply to you from your relevant national parliament. Students from elsewhere in the EU will normally pay the same as students from England, while other international students will pay fees under our international arrangements; please contact our International Office for more information.

The deadline for completed applications is 31 May 2013.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/student-finance.



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