BA English Literature and Community Engagement

Application pack for 2019 entry

www.bristol.ac.uk/english/study/part-time
BA English Literature and Community Engagement

Application pack for 2019 entry

About your application

The deadline for applications to this programme in 2019/20 is Monday 1 July 2019. Interviews will be held later that month. If you are likely to be away during that period, you are encouraged to apply early, so we can arrange an alternative interview date. To download an application pack, visit our website at www.bristol.ac.uk/english/study/part-time

You are advised to read the information in this pack carefully before completing your application. Please address any questions about the application process or the degree to Gareth Griffith on gareth.griffith@bristol.ac.uk

Aims of the course

The undergraduate degree in English Literature and Community Engagement is offered part-time over six years and is taught one evening per week plus occasional Saturdays. It aims to develop a student’s interest in, and knowledge and understanding of, a full range of literature in English.

The programme reflects the English Department’s wider commitment to maintaining a balance between established traditions of literary study and the latest developments in the subject. A variety of approaches to literature will be introduced and students will have opportunities to develop skills in reading and in critical writing. The aim is that students should acquire relevant conceptual awareness, and a sense of the history, chronological development and contexts of literature and its various phases and modes, without passively accepting received ideas. A particular aim of this programme is that students should develop their ability to relate theoretical questions of readership to responses from readers outside the academy, in part through undertaking a project in the community, such as running a reading group.
Admission requirements

The course is open to all. Applications from those returning to education after a gap are encouraged and we admit students from a wide range of educational backgrounds who have some knowledge of, and plenty of enthusiasm for, the subject. Potential applicants should note that accommodation cannot be offered.

Applicants will be required to complete an application form and will normally be invited to attend an interview. Each application is judged on its own merits and we welcome applications from potential students who may have no prior qualifications, who are able to demonstrate their readiness to undertake the course through the personal statement and at interview; such applicants may be asked to complete a piece of written work as part of the application process.

For those applicants completing a prior qualification, we would normally expect a good pass in a relevant Access course or in the University’s Reading English Literature (REL) short course or a grade ‘B’ or above in A-Level English Literature. However, any prior award might be supplemented by evidence of wider reading and interest in the subject and, again, each application will be judged on its own merits.

Where appropriate it may be possible to award students credits for prior learning or prior study, achieved either at the University of Bristol or at another higher education institution, at the point of admission. Students who have credits from earlier study that might be relevant may wish to discuss this issue with Gareth Griffith (see contact details above) prior to submitting their application.

Due to visa restrictions, we are unable to accept applications from international students for this part-time course.

A Unique Degree

The part-time BA English Literature and Community Engagement is unique. It offers you a chance to gain an undergraduate degree from the University of Bristol, while attending one night per week, and to share what you are learning in the wider community. It is aimed at students of all ages who wish to study part-time.

What You Will Study

The programme consists of seminars, workshops, oral presentations and individual consultations with tutors. The vast majority of contact hours take place on Wednesday evenings from 6 pm to 9 pm (normally there will be around 25 such seminars in each year of study). A variety of activities take place during these times, including lectures, discussion, and small group work.

The first two years are introductory, providing training in the skills and conventions of academic writing and also the skills and practices of community engagement. In these two years, you undertake two broad ways of reading units; units focusing on poetry and Early Modern drama; and units that introduce concepts relevant to using literature in the community. In years three to six, you study five period units covering everything from medieval poetry to the contemporary novel, and units focusing on Postcolonial and American literatures.
**Fees and Funding**

**Please note:** In 2019/20, loans for tuition will be available to eligible part-time degree students, except those who already hold an equivalent qualification. Eligible students will **not** have to pay up front for their tuition.

The cost of tuition may be paid by a loan which students will only start to repay from four years after they commence the programme and only if they are earning over £25,000. **If/while you are earning less than this amount, you will not have to pay back anything.** See more information on loans below.

What will the tuition fee be in 2019/20

The tuition fee for this programme for students starting in 2019/20 will be £3,100 per year of the course (increasing annually in line with inflation in each year from 2019/20), or approximately £18,000 for the six-year programme as a whole (allowing for inflationary increases).

How does this compare to the fee for full-time programmes?

The annual tuition fee for full-time programmes is £9,250 per full-time year, or approximately £27,750 for a three-year programme as a whole (allowing for inflationary increases).

**Student Loan Repayments**

When will I start repaying any loans I take out?

You will only start to repay your tuition loan if you are earning at least £25,000.

New part-time students start making repayments in the April four years after the start of their course, or the April after they leave the course, whichever comes first. So, for example, if you start this six-year degree course in September 2019 and have a job that pays £25,000, you will start repayments in April 2023.

What would happen if my income falls below £25,000?

If for any reason your income falls below £25,000 your repayments will be suspended.

Will I always be liable for any student loan debt?

All outstanding repayments will be written off after 30 years.

How do the loan repayments work?

The repayment process is simple as it will be deducted automatically from your pay packet through the tax system. Interest on your loan will be charged at Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 3% while you are studying, and up until the April after you leave university. From the April after you leave university if you are earning below £25,000, interest will be applied at the RPI. Graduates earning between £25,000 and £41,000 will be charged interest on a sliding scale up to a maximum of RPI plus 3%.

Students with disabilities

Extra financial help will be available to disabled students studying on a part-time basis through Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs). These grants are paid in addition to the standard student
finance package. They do not depend on income and do not have to be repaid. More information is available here: https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas

More information
There is more information on the financial support available to part-time students on this website: http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/content.php?r=597-Part-time-students

The Financial Assistance Fund
Students who need extra financial help to meet costs that are not met from other sources of support, or students who have particular financial emergencies and as a result of these circumstances are at risk of leaving higher education should consider applying to the Access to Learning Fund. The Access to Learning Fund can assist part time students with course related costs.

Help from the Student Funding Office
The Student Funding Office at the University of Bristol can assist you should you have any issues applying for your tuition fee loan and can give advice on the Access to Learning Fund.

Contact details for the Student Funding Office
Student Funding Office
University of Bristol
Senate House (Ground Floor)
Tyndall Avenue
Bristol BS8 1TH

Office opening hours
Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

Telephone: +44 (0) 117 331 7972
Email: student-funding@bristol.ac.uk
Fax: +44 (0) 117 331 7873
Course structure

LEVEL C (Certificate level)

Year One

Ways of Reading 1: Forms and Approaches (20 credits)
This unit will offer students a broad introduction to ways of reading literature, including close reading and a range of critical approaches. There will be opportunities to compare and contrast a variety of literary forms. Topics studied may include readers and reading (both in theory and in practice, looking forwards to future work in community engagement); the author, language, the tragic, the comic, and history; and the relationship between critical thinking and creativity.

Poetry (20 credits)
This unit will encourage students to read and appreciate a wide range of poetry. It will introduce literary concepts such as genre, historical context, and critical theory. There will be a particular emphasis on poetic form and voice; through this approach, students will be encouraged to consider both particular authors and the development of certain forms across time. There will be an opportunity to study poetry in draft as well as in published forms, and through this to think about the process of composition.

Introduction to Literature and Community Engagement 1 (20 credits)
This unit is designed to introduce students to the uses of literature in community settings, and to engagement work with the public more widely. Through seminars with experts in these fields (both in Bristol and nationally), students will have an opportunity to gain insight into the developing regional and national agenda related to universities, learning, and community outreach, and to develop practical skills for running a reading group as part of their future studies.

Year Two

Ways of Reading 2: Critical Thought and Theory (20 credits)
Building on the work undertaken in 'Ways of Reading 1', this unit will offer an introduction to a broad range of critical thinkers and theorists, and to creative writers thinking reflectively about their work. Students will be asked to consider the relevance of these materials to a range of primary texts and to the development of their own critical voice. There will be opportunities to compare and contrast a variety of approaches to literature, and to consider the relationship between critical or reflective thought and creative thinking.

Shakespeare and Early Modern Drama (20 credits)
This unit will introduce a number of works by Shakespeare and other dramatists writing in the same period. There will be a particular focus on reading their works as texts, including concepts such as language, form, and character. Students will have the chance to consider different aspects of Shakespeare's writing, and the ways in which he is and is not like other writers in his time.

Introduction to Literature and Community Engagement 2 (20 credits)
This unit is designed to enable each student to establish a reading group in the community or at their place of work, either on their own or in collaboration with another student. Students will be assisted in finding a suitable placement and will then complete a series of directed tasks related to publicity, finding and/or producing appropriate resources, managing a reading group session, and liaising with staff and/or volunteers within a community setting. Students will also be offered training on managing difficult situations.

Potential exit award: Certificate in English Literature and Community Engagement
LEVEL I (Intermediate Level)

Year Three

Literature in its Time 1: Chaucer to Early Modern (20 credits)
This unit will examine poetry and prose from the late fourteenth century to the mid-seventeenth, complementing the unit on early modern drama in year 2. Students will be encouraged to think about themes and styles of poetry and prose that develop across this period; prominent individual writers; the value of periodisation; challenges of studying literature in historical context.

Between Men and Women: Gender in Literature (20 credits)
This unit will introduce a range of approaches for thinking about gender in literature. Students will have opportunities to read a variety of texts, in different forms, chosen from a range of historical periods. Topics covered may include the representation of women in literature; autobiographical writing; male and female readers; sexuality; androgyny; feminist literary criticism and the canon; the relationship between the sexes; and gender roles.

Literature and Community Engagement in Practice 1 (20 credits)
This unit aims to support students in continuing to run a reading group in a community setting, or at their workplace. There will be an emphasis within the unit on (i) strategies for broadening the range of readers engaged with the group, and (ii) utilising as broad a variety of literature as is practical in this setting. Where the group established in ‘Introduction to Literature and Community Engagement 2’ was unsuccessful and/or where it has been discontinued for any reason, students may undertake to set up a new group as part of this unit.

Year Four

Literature in its Time 2: From Milton to Johnson (20 credits)
This unit will introduce students to the wealth of literature in English in the period running approximately from 1660 to 1750. There will be opportunities to consider the rise of the novel and developments in poetry; students will also be encouraged to study parallel developments in society and in enlightenment thought, and changing methods of literary production and consumption.

Postcolonial Literature (20 credits)
This unit will introduce students to something of the range, depth, and continuing development of postcolonial writing in the past fifty years. There will be opportunities to read fiction, non-fiction prose and poetry, and to consider recent and current postcolonial theory and criticism.

Literature and Community Engagement in Practice 2 (20 credits)
This unit aims to support students in continuing to run a reading group in a community setting, or at their workplace. Where the group established in earlier units was unsuccessful and/or where it has been discontinued for any reason, students may undertake to set up a new group as part of this unit. This is the final practice-based community engagement unit, so there will be a particular emphasis on finishing the project and on transferring the group to a student in another year or ensuring that it is able to continue independent of support.

Potential exit award: Diploma in English Literature and Community Engagement
LEVEL H (Honours Level)

Year Five

Literature in its Time 3: Romantic and Victorian Poetry (20 credits)
This unit will introduce students to the range and diversity of writing in the Romantic and Victorian periods, including both canonical and lesser known authors. There will be a particular emphasis on poetry, though prose writings will also be considered. Topics covered may include the difficulty of defining romanticism; female poets of the period; Poetry and Europe; Poetry and war; politics; parody; and the relationship between literature and other art forms.

Literature in its Time 4: Nineteenth-Century Prose (20 credits)
This unit offers an opportunity to study prose from across the nineteenth-century. The focus will be mainly on the novel, from Jane Austen to Thomas Hardy. Other relevant prose works will also be considered, especially those that influenced imaginative writers in this century – for example, Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*.

Special Author Study (20 credits)
This unit aims to allow students to undertake a special author study, examining a range of writings by one writer under the supervision of an adviser. Students will produce an extended essay arising out of this work.

Year Six

Literature in its Time 5: Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose (20 credits)
This unit will introduce poetry and prose written in the period from 1900 to 2000. Students will be encouraged to read a range of works; to compare and contrast the use of a variety of forms by different writers; and to place these writings in the context of literary, political, historical, scientific and other developments in this period.

American Literature (20 credits)
This unit aims to introduce students to a selection of poetry and prose that gives a flavour of the development and variety of American literature. Examples will be chosen from across the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries, and may include authors such as Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg, Frank O’Hara, Sylvia Plath, Saul Bellow, and John Updike.

Plus one from:

- **Dissertation (20 credits)**
The dissertation is an essay of 6,000 words on a subject of a student’s choice that has been agreed by the Unit Director. Students choosing to write a dissertation will meet regularly with an adviser for discussion of preparatory reading and research, work in progress, and drafts, etc.

- **Research Project on Literature and Community Engagement (20 credits)**
This unit allows students to write an essay of 6000 words on a subject of their choice related to literature and community engagement, that has been agreed by the Unit Director. Students choosing to write an essay of this kind will meet regularly with an adviser for discussion of preparatory reading and research, work in progress, and drafts, etc. Such a project will normally develop out of theoretical and practical issues explored in earlier literature/ community engagement units.

*Award: BA English Literature and Community Engagement*
Teaching, learning and assessment

The course consists of seminars, workshops, oral presentations and individual consultations with tutors. The vast majority of contact hours will take place one evening a week from 6pm to 9pm. We expect the seminars for the course starting in 2019/20 to take place on Wednesday evenings and the first class of the year to be on 18th September.

A variety of activities will take place during taught hours, including lectures, discussion, and small group work. There will in addition be occasional all day seminars on a Saturday. Students will have full access to, and borrowing rights at, the Arts and Social Sciences Library and access to a wide range of online resources.

Assessment methods will vary in different units, though there is a strong emphasis on essay-writing. For example, many units will be assessed through two essays. Assessment in other units may include seminar presentations, and in the community engagement units there will often be a diary or other reflective exercise. Satisfactory attendance is required on all units.

A variety of lecturers in the English Department teach on this programme. For a full listing of all staff, visit the University website at: www.bris.ac.uk/english/staff/
Our students range in age from early 20s to late 70s. The course recruits students from an exceptionally wide range of social, educational and ethnic backgrounds. Most of our students work, full- or part-time; a few are retired; many have family or other commitments. Some students started the course soon after completing an A-Level or Access course, while others had been out of education for up to forty years. This diversity is an important part of what makes any discussion on the course wide-ranging and widely informed – and we believe that it also helps make the course a shared adventure.

You can read more about our students – in their own words – on our website: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english/study/part-time/elce-course/students/
**Why community engagement?**

‘Reading has assumed many different forms among different social groups in different eras. Men and women have read in order to save their souls, to improve their manners, to repair their machinery, to seduce their sweethearts, to learn about current events, and simply to have fun.’

– Robert Darnton, book historian

Our community projects are designed to celebrate the diverse uses of reading in our lives and students set up projects in a wide range of venues, currently including libraries, pubs, community centres, a drug rehabilitation centre and a prison.

This course is founded on a belief that education has value not only to the individual, but also to society and to the wider community. Students reflect on what they are learning and utilize it in some form in a community setting, from the second to fourth year of the course.

Some students feel nervous to begin with about this aspect of the course. Each student has an opportunity to develop a project that fits with their other commitments and which is in a setting in which they feel comfortable. Often the project is in the form of a reading group, but students can do this work in other ways, if they don’t wish to run a group or if it evolves in a new form out of their interaction with the community. The groups may read literary works that are also studied on the degree or popular fiction, non-fiction, short stories or extracts that are read aloud.

We ensure that all students have appropriate levels of preparation and support in undertaking any project. Students are not expected to take on a wider role in the setting, such as a therapeutic or social care role, even where this is the focus of the work undertaken by the community partner. The focus is on the uses of reading in a wide variety of places.

The range and diversity of projects our students undertake is something we celebrate and each project is also shaped by the needs, interests and participation of the community with whom the student engages.

**A community engagement project**

_Helen Thornhill is graduated in 2014 from the BA in English Literature and Community Engagement; she writes here about running a reading group with the Bristol Drugs Project._

After various bits of preparatory work, I started running a monthly book group at the Bristol Drugs Project at the end of the second year of the course. At the Project I am part of a community with two distinct sides to it. On the one hand there is a shifting, mercurial population of individuals who are travelling their painful journey out of addiction. On the other is a dedicated group of highly professional project workers who remain a constant, structured element in the lives of those whom they are helping.

I never know who will come to the group, I never know how many people, I never quite know what we will do. If the word ‘group’ conjures up any ideas of sameness and regularity, that does not describe those who come to read with me every month. Lots of people may come once and
never come back or they come at irregular intervals. This is partly due to the fact that they move on when they have finished their six-weekly programmes and, of course, is partly a reflection of the chaos that they struggle with in their lives. Maybe some of them just find that the book group is not for them.

The uncertainty is balanced by many constant factors. There is always one of the Project workers with me, who gives me invaluable feed-back. I can use photocopying facilities to print off enough copies of whatever extracts I am working with. We always have the same room available to us with plenty of chairs. There are tea and coffee making facilities. I also bring a box of books which are given to me by the manager of a second-hand book-shop. They are not wanted in the shop and would otherwise be pulped. Most people take some books away with them.

I have tried to have some kind of reasonably structured theme every month working with extracts. I’ve found I can be quite adventurous. I often try to take my cues from something that has been said or asked for in the group. For example someone said that they liked reading ‘books about real people’. One month I brought in some extracts from Sons and Lovers by D.H. Lawrence to show how the background of an author’s real life could be transported into a story. The next month I made a list of autobiographies which I found in the library and photocopied some extracts from them which we read and discussed. One of the books was The Diving Bell and the Butterfly which generated a lot of interest. It is a short book which I’ve learnt can be an important factor as sustained concentration can sometimes be a problem for those who are still in a disturbed place within themselves. A woman who returned the following month had been to the library to get it out. On other occasions I have asked people to bring a book or a poem with them to talk to us all about which has worked well.

Many people who come to the group are very well read. At the end of one of my sessions one participant started to talk about Ulysses by James Joyce. Everyone was curious so I promised that I would bring in an extract the following month. I did and we talked about it for an hour and a half.

I no longer know who runs who. The groups often direct the course of proceedings. The element of the unknown was something I found difficult in organising the reading but recently I have come to see it as something quite special, quite creative. It leads me down avenues that I would not otherwise have explored. On the whole those who come to read with me are full of originality. They are used to working in groups and express themselves with honesty and very open minds.

Jeanette Murphy works at the Bristol Drugs Project and has been supporting the reading group. Here she gives her perspective on it....

People who have spent years using street drugs are likely to have devoted most of their time and energy to earning the money for these substances, tracking them down, and using them. This means that they are likely to have neglected other aspects of their lives, hobbies, work, fun, relationships. It means that, to a large extent, their world has shrunk.

Reading about the different places, people and experiences that books describe opens the world up for us all, and maybe especially so for those in recovery. I have seen group members excited, moved and tantalised by the readings and discussions that Helen has led. Her contribution in starting a book group at BDP has been very welcome.
We have put the answers to some frequently asked questions below. If you have a question that is not covered here, then please get in touch.

- **What happens after I apply?**

We will send you an acknowledgement of your application form within 21 days of receiving it. **If you do not receive an acknowledgement, then please contact us** as this may mean it has not arrived. All application forms will be passed to the Course Director, Gareth Griffith. Interviews for this course will be held in July 2019.

- **What will I be asked at interview?**

One aim of the interview will be to give you a detailed picture of the course. So, the interview is partly an opportunity for you to ask questions. We will ask you about: your reasons for wanting to study on the degree, what you enjoy reading, how the course would fit in with your other commitments, and your aims and ambitions after you finish the degree.

- **I don’t have A-Levels (or) I don’t have GCSE English (or) I didn’t do well at school... can I apply?**

Yes! You do not need to have previous qualifications to apply for the course, if you can demonstrate that you are motivated and enthusiastic, that you have read a range of literature, and that you are committed to and prepared for study at this level. If you do apply without prior qualifications, we may ask you to complete a short piece of written work as part of the application process. You will receive advice on this before you are asked to do it.

- **How do you decide who gets a place on the course?**

As well as looking at prior qualifications or at evidence of your interest in the subject, we will be looking for students who are motivated, enthusiastic and committed; who have strong reasons for wanting to study on this particular degree in a part-time mode; and who can demonstrate that they will be able to manage the demands of study at this level.

- **How can I fit my studies around work and/or family?**

The ELCE course is part of Bristol’s commitment to offering more flexible learning opportunities – it is designed for people who have to balance studying with work, family, or other parts of their life. The course is taught on approximately 25 evenings per year. By concentrating the contact hours within one night per week, we hope to make the degree accessible to those with other commitments. On top of this, you would normally be expected to complete approximately 10-12 hours of work in your own time each week.

- **How does this degree relate to the BA English that runs during the day?**

The BA ELCE is designed to draw on the strengths of the BA English at Bristol, which runs during the day, particular through a commitment to studying a wide variety of literature in English across many different periods. It aims to offer a similar programme within more flexible hours and in combination with a unique community engagement element. Both BAs in English are taught by the same staff and validated by the same exam board – that is, overseen by the same examiners at Bristol and externals from other universities – so the same academic standards are applied on both programmes.
▪ Is there an option to switch to full-time study?

Students may request to switch to full-time study after completing the Certificate (at the end of year two) or Diploma (at the end of year four). This will, however, depend on circumstances and student numbers in any given year and it cannot be offered as a guaranteed option.

▪ Six years is a long time! What happens if I do not complete the degree?

Students who for any reason are unable to complete all six years can still complete one of two awards: a Certificate (after two years) or Diploma (after four) in English Literature and Community Engagement. It may also be possible to transfer credits accumulated on this course to another institution.

▪ Does a university like Bristol really want to take mature students like me?

Yes! The University has a proud tradition of involvement in adult education and community engagement and we welcome the different perspective and knowledge mature students bring to their studies. In the English Department in 2014/15, for example, over 200 people are studying short and longer part-time courses. Statistical information gathered from these courses shows that we recruit students crossing all barriers of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social class, and prior educational achievement.

▪ Isn’t it very expensive to go to university?

We realise that financing a degree, or any long-term programme of study, can seem daunting, particularly if you have other responsibilities. But there is help available, from the government and from the University (see information on Fees and Funding above). The new systems of loans that was introduced for part-time students in 2012 means that any student starting an undergraduate degree for the first time does not have to pay any of their fees up front.

▪ Are the community engagement units compulsory?

The community engagement units are a compulsory part of the course. However, they are also an especially flexible element of it, designed to fit with each student’s interests and other commitments. Some of our students undertake a project at work, for example, or at a community setting with which they already have some involvement. Some of our students feel nervous about undertaking this element of the course before it begins, but each student is able to develop a project that is appropriate for them.

▪ How will the community engagement work be organised?

The first year of study will offer some background information and training to prepare each student for the community engagement work. During the second year, we will help you to find a suitable project in the community. You may, for example, wish to run a reading group at work or in a community setting with which you are familiar (where agreement is reached with the employer or other relevant persons); or we will be offering a range of projects organized with Bristol Libraries and a number of community groups; or you may wish to use what you are learning in other ways.

You can see some more, general information on being a mature student at Bristol online at: www.bristol.ac.uk/study/mature/
“I left school at 16…

It never would have occurred to me to go to university…

…I love the course…

It opens your mind to what you can get out of a book…

It could open your eyes to what studying can do

”

…one of our students.