BIRKBECK IMPACT: THE POWER OF GENEROSITY

2021/22
After a difficult period of lockdowns and restrictions, it was heartening to be able to welcome students, staff, alumni and friends back to campus this year.

Being in the centre of Bloomsbury with dusk drawing in and the buzz of students heading to classes after work is the quintessential Birkbeck experience — one which has been sorely missed.

We have taken many lessons from the pandemic, but challenging times still lie ahead, especially for the most vulnerable in our community. With your generous support we are continuing to create pathways to education for all.

We are strengthening our financial and pastoral provision to offer every student the tools and opportunities they need to succeed, and we remain committed to investing in world-leading research to help bring about change around the globe.

The World Needs More Birkbeck Campaign was launched just 10 months ago, and the initial response has been remarkable. The generosity you have shown is a clear demonstration that our community stands alongside Birkbeck and cares deeply about our students and researchers.

We are excited to now approach our third century with you, our community, continuing to play an integral role in our future.

Thank you.

Professor David Latchman CBE, Vice-Chancellor
“It now seems a long time ago that I was thinking about dropping out. I would never have completed my degree, let alone get a first, if it wasn’t for everything Birkbeck did for me. Thank you!”

– Mark, BSc Biomedicine
Rhys Brown, LLB Law

“I entered secondary education excited to be attending a prestigious school on a music scholarship. But at 14 years old I was diagnosed with severe epilepsy and my education completely broke down. No adjustments were made for my condition, and I ended up leaving school with no GCSEs or A-levels.

After spending the next four years mostly bedbound, I felt incredibly let down by an institution that should have had the willingness and resources to support me. So at 24 years old I represented myself in an eight-day trial against my old school, winning damages for professional negligence. During the trial, I met a barrister who encouraged me to pursue a career in law. He was a Birkbeck alumnus and explained that the College considers applications on much more than traditional qualifications.

Before starting my course, Birkbeck’s Disability Service got in touch with me and established what would help me to study and thrive. I was given advice on how to seek support from the College and from the government. It felt amazing having people on your side who wanted you to succeed.

Studying here put my life back on track. I’ve just graduated with a first-class degree and I’m now on the path to passing the Bar.”

Nisa Rainy, MSc Developmental Sciences

“Before coming to the UK, I was a doctor in one of Indonesia’s busiest hospitals. My husband and I moved here so he could pursue his PhD and ultimately, create a better life for our child when we return.

I put my career on hold to focus on raising my son. It was difficult to adjust to the isolation of domestic life, and I spent several months overcoming postnatal depression. But these tough times sparked motivation. I became fascinated by children’s development, different parenting styles and how migration affects mental health in the nuclear family. As a medical doctor, I felt I had something to contribute to this field.

When I saw the support on offer for those with caring responsibilities at Birkbeck, as well as the diverse, mature student body and their world-leading research, I knew it was the right place for me.

I am so grateful to have been awarded this scholarship and so impressed that Birkbeck and their supporter community enable students like me to have this experience. I can now afford additional childcare, giving me a few more precious hours to focus on my study.

I’ve been inspired to take my learnings and expertise back to my community and contribute to the understanding of child development and parental experiences in Indonesia.”
Uncovering challenges in facial identity recognition

Bayparvah Kaur Gehdu is part of an important cohort of PhD scholars tackling under-representation and bringing new voices to the world of research. Her research uses innovative new methods to study facial identity recognition in autistic individuals.

Public discourse and literature often suggest that autistic individuals have difficulty identifying emotions and showing empathy. However, Bayparvah’s research indicates that such challenges may be related to other conditions or traits that are not specific to autism but display commonly among autistic individuals. Such conditions include developmental prosopagnosia, known as ‘face blindness’, and alexithymia, which describes problems with identifying or feeling emotions.

“While we shouldn’t always expect neurodiverse individuals to align with neurotypical societal norms, I am hopeful this research will assist the development of accessible coaching and peer support groups to help people navigate their daily lives by increasing their facial recognition and subsequent communication skills.”

Bayparvah works with several grassroots organisations to challenge the stigmatisation of neurodiversity and disability, particularly within South Asian communities: “This scholarship has given me the confidence and credentials to play a more active part in this mission.”

Informing anti-corruption strategies

Dr Barry Maydom is a lecturer in politics and an expert on the political economy of migration. Last year he received a seed funding grant, made possible by our donor community, to develop a new project on anti-corruption strategies in developing countries.

Dr Maydom’s research focuses on understanding how migration and remittance payments can affect corruption. To launch the project, he is conducting a survey in Mexico, a country which receives more than US$27 billion each year in remittances, has a high bribery rate, and has many citizens living abroad. This will help to establish the causal effects of remittances on bribery and provide more information on corruption experiences.

“Weak bureaucracies and rampant corruption often hinder the provision of public services, which can result in the payment of bribes to secure these services. This in turn leads individuals to emigrate and send remittances home to compensate for government failures. However, we want to establish whether remittances can also contribute to corrupt practices and what policies could ensure that money sent home to loved ones is not consumed by corruption.”

Dr Maydom’s findings will inform policy papers on anti-corruption strategies for NGOs and policymakers in Mexico and beyond.
that the space they are taught in influences their productivity, motivation and creativity. Now we have the potential to deliver the high calibre learning experience they deserve.

With the support of our community, we are on the verge of completing an inclusive, unified campus that brings Birkbeck students from around the world together to deliver an outstanding student experience.

**Investment in world-class research**

“The Wohl Wolfson ToddlerLab at Birkbeck is the world’s first of its kind. Now, fully open and operational after the pandemic, we are already seeing the benefits to our research. The building and bespoke technology will allow us to overcome some of the major issues with investigating cognitive development in toddlers.

We are working on the development and integration of fully wearable technologies that enable us to assess brain activity as toddlers complete engaging social tasks — something that just isn’t possible in conventional lab settings. In doing so, we can start to fill the gap in our knowledge on this age range and explore the changes the brain undergoes during toddlerhood.

This research has the potential to help us discover early markers of neurodevelopmental conditions like autism, and therefore contribute to more specialised pathways of support from younger ages.

Investing in world-leading facilities like this is so important. It brings some of the most talented researchers and students to Birkbeck, who go on to contribute to cutting-edge research, develop leading scientific technologies and significantly improve the lives of children around the globe.”

*Paola Pinti, Senior Research Laboratory Developer*
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THE WORLD NEEDS MORE BIRKBECK

STUDENT SUPPORT

Lydia Carrick, BSc Marketing

“I didn’t go to university at 18, but after working for several years I felt I needed a degree to take that next career step. Now, two years into my course, it’s given me so much more than I expected.

In 2016, my dad lost his leg below the knee following a serious motorbike accident and I saw firsthand the lack of guidance for someone going through such a traumatic, transformative period. I realised there was potential for a business idea that could be life-changing for amputees, but I wasn’t sure I had the skills or knowledge to get it up and running.

While studying, I took part in Birkbeck’s donor-funded business accelerator programme. My idea was for an app that would guide new amputees through their hospital stay and recovery, and collate information from doctors, mental health professionals and other amputees. I attended seminars with amazing speakers and gained invaluable insight, guidance and support across many different business topics.

At the end of the year, I won the ‘Best Business Idea Award’ and I’m due to launch my business in 2023. This wouldn’t have been possible without the opportunities Birkbeck offers — it is one of the best things I’ve ever done. It has changed my life.”

Yousra Loudiyi, LLB Law with Foundation Year

“At 15 years old I was forced to leave school due to family financial difficulties.

Five years later I moved to the UK and began working as a hairdresser to help support my family. But having never completed my education, I often felt inadequate and incomplete. I longed for the opportunity to study and follow my dream of becoming a lawyer, but life commitments always got in the way.

After winning a court case in 2017 for the custody of my daughter, I had newfound confidence and encouragement to revisit my dream. I enrolled on a local college course to study GCSE English so I could study at Birkbeck.

Since starting my law degree, I have always felt valued, supported, and heard by my teachers and peers.

Receiving a bursary has meant that I am able to reduce work commitments to focus on my studies, and still fulfil my duties as a single mother.

But furthermore, receiving support that recognises my academic potential, as well as the work I’ve put in and the sacrifices I’ve made, makes me more determined than ever to excel in my course and be a good role model for my daughter.”

IN 2021-2022

More than 100 students took part in our business accelerator programme, involving 25 hours of workshops with experts

Our online support service for improving academic attainment was accessed 8,500 times by students

The College ran 227 study skills workshops which were attended 5,650 times
“Birkbeck consciously tackles societal inequality by providing a world-class education to those who choose to work by day and study at night. It is a privilege to be an alumnus and supporter of an academic institution that goes above and beyond to improve the career prospects of all their students.”

– Andy Lennard (BA Global Politics and International Relations 2014), Chairman of the Texel Group

“The Year in Review:
2021-22

This year we raised £5,448,874

- We welcomed new donors to our supporter community: 172
- 1,306 people made gifts to Birkbeck

- £800,000 was awarded in bursaries, scholarships and hardship awards

This year, gifts made to the College were pledged to the following Campaign priorities:

- Advancing Research: 14%
- Student Support & Widening Access: 45%
- Infrastructure & Estates: 29%
- Greatest Need: 12%
With your help, we can continue to support the next generation of changemakers and further our founding mission of making high-quality education accessible to all. We can keep building an environment that supports a diverse learning community and delivers world-class research with the power to create positive change.

The generosity of donors is vital to Birkbeck’s continued success. To learn more about how your generosity can have an impact or to make a gift, please visit campaign.bbk.ac.uk.

Thank you for supporting Birkbeck.