Study skills and resources
Study skills

Independent learning

University-level study is very different from school-level study. You will be expected to take responsibility for your own learning and to make effective use of all the resources at your disposal – human, printed and electronic – to develop your subject knowledge and your critical and analytical skills.

Developing effective study habits at the outset is essential, and some general advice for new undergraduates is provided on the next page. Your academic school will provide guidance on the specific skills required for your particular subject, whether this is writing up the results of practical classes, taking effective notes, carrying out fieldwork or writing essays. This guidance may be delivered during your normal classes or via handbooks or online tutorials. Skills development is a continuous process, and you are encouraged to reflect on your own progress and to take advantage of all the help that is on offer, not only in the early days but throughout your programme of study.

Generic skills

In addition to subject-specific skills, all students are offered opportunities to develop a range of generic skills. These will not only improve your academic performance but also enhance your job prospects: they regularly top the 'wish-lists' of skills that graduate employers look for in their prospective employees. These include such things as:

- managing and motivating yourself
- using your time effectively
- solving problems systematically
- prioritising tasks effectively
- generating ideas
- making informed, evidence-based and well-justified decisions
- making presentations
- listening to others and appreciating different points of view
- negotiating and working within a team towards a common goal
- supporting and encouraging others

- adapting to new situations
- setting targets for your personal development (see Personal Development Planning, Section 1).

Useful links

The Faculty of Arts has developed a valuable online resource for its students, which includes a first year skills audit which students are required to complete during their first term. Much of the material is relevant for students in other faculties as well. Topics covered include:

- a questionnaire to help you identify your own learning style
- advice on note-taking and referencing, with follow-up exercises
- advice on grammar, punctuation and style, to improve your writing, with follow-up exercises.

See **www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/skills/self.html**.

Study spaces

There are many spaces around the University where students can study, including libraries, cafés, common rooms and computer rooms. Study spaces are equipped with wi-fi for your own devices, and many have open-access computers.

For information about where you can study, see **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/studyspaces**.

Study skills and resources
Study tips

Developing effective study habits

Just reading a book while you're on the sofa watching the football or a film is not active learning! Many of us study passively, underlining some things and copying out chunks of text to use as quotations and evidence later on. Here is a 7-point plan to make your learning more productive.

1. Set up an area that you use specifically for study, so that you associate it with work and a concentrating mindset. This could be in your bedroom, in the library or wherever you want, but make sure your environment distracts you as little as possible, and ensure that you've got all the equipment you need to hand.

2. Decide how much you will read or for how long you are going to work, and schedule it for a time when you are awake and able to concentrate. If you're a late night worker, then don't force yourself to study at 8am; don't disregard your natural preferences. Work effectively for short periods of time, not aimlessly for hours. Write a timetable to keep you on track.

3. Get into the habit of skimming and scanning a text to see if it is worth reading in detail. Don't waste time reading irrelevant material.

4. If you really need to take a lot of notes then do so, but re-read them the next day and write down exactly how they will be used in your assignment. If they are not relevant, put them aside. Don't throw notes away until the end, though, as your thoughts will develop during the learning process and you may wish to refer to them later on.

5. Notes and diagrams will help you to retain a sense of structure and progression, as will researching information for future reference.

6. File carefully and be organised.

7. Make sure that you comment on every idea, concept or quotation that you note down, otherwise you are not thinking critically: you are just restating other people's ideas.

Reports, assignments and essays

Producing written assignments forms part of every student's workload, to a greater or lesser extent. Observing these general guidelines will help you approach the task in a structured way and make the actual writing process easier.

- Before you even think about the first draft you should produce a detailed work plan
- Draw up a clear structure for the reader to follow, starting with a general outline and then adding more layers of detail
- Divide the document into main sections and then into sub-sections. What will go into each section? Decide what the main topic is for each and allocate the key points and their supporting evidence
- Write the introduction and each subsequent paragraph so that it contains a 'signpost' telling the reader where they are. Remember that what is clear to you may well need clarifying for your audience
- Identify how each section links to the preceding and subsequent one. Does your argument proceed logically? Does it flow? Are you making a comparison, or are you extending your discussion of a particular point?
- Maintain a critical approach – rehearse and test your arguments as fully as possible before you start the first draft. If something feels vague, then you can guarantee that it will be noticed by your tutor
- Start fleshing out these detailed notes into a first draft. This should now be far easier than working with a blank screen or page
- However, beware of plagiarism (see Section 1). Make sure all your sources are correctly referenced.

Study skills and resources
Library services

Your libraries

The University Library is made up of 10 libraries providing a range of services including:
- study spaces (for quiet and group study)
- networked PCs and wi-fi
- your recommended reading, together with over 1.4 million print books and journals, and online access to thousands of eBooks, eJournals and databases
- printing, photocopying and scanning facilities
- help and advice.

More information, including opening hours, can be found at **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/study/libraries**.

Quick search

Quick search on the Library home page at **bristol.ac.uk/library** is a convenient way to search for Library resources. Use the tabs to start searching for books, journals and research databases.

Finding books

Use the Library's online catalogue at **www.lib.bris.ac.uk/ALEPH** to find out whether it has a particular book or eBook, or books on your subject. You can also search the catalogue through the Library option of MyBristol. The catalogue will show the location of an item and whether it is on loan, and will offer the option to reserve an item already on loan or place an advance booking for a Short Loan Collection (SLC) item.

Finding journals and using research databases

The library subscribes to thousands of journals and databases. You can search for eJournals and printed journals on the Journal tab of Quick search on the Library home page at **www.bristol.ac.uk/library**. If you are searching within a research database, look out for and use the Library's Get it! buttons to save yourself time. Use MetaLib, the Library's research resource gateway, to access databases. Go to **www.metalib.bris.ac.uk**.

Off-site access to electronic resources

See **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/resources/eresources/access/#off-site** for advice on accessing eJournals, eBooks and databases off-campus.

Inter-library loans service

Items unavailable online and not held by the Library can be requested using the 'Inter-library loans' option on the online catalogue. See **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/borrowing/interloans**.

Borrowing from the Library

Use the online catalogue to find where items are held and, if loanable, for how long they may be borrowed.
- Most libraries operate a Short Loan Collection (SLC), consisting of the most heavily used items.
- Some libraries have self-issue points. You will need your *U*Card and Library PIN to use these (you can find your Library PIN in MyBristol's Library section).
- There is a limit to the number of items you may borrow at any one time; ask Library staff for details or see **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/borrowing/loans.html**.

Recalls and returning items

- If an item that you have on loan is recalled you must return the item by the new date given on the recall notice.
- Fines are charged for the late return of items; ask Library staff for details or see **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/borrowing/fines.html**.
- Overdue and recall notices are sent to your University of Bristol email account, so please check this regularly.
- Library borrowing privileges for postgraduates are set for the duration of your course – not the date shown on your *U*Card.
- Lost and damaged items will be charged for, together with an administration charge.

Your Library account

'My Library Account' can be accessed on the online catalogue or via the Library section of MyBristol (see below). It allows you to:
- check what you have on loan (and renew loans where permitted)
- view/cancel reservations and advance bookings for SLC items
- check cash transactions, such as library fines, and the progress of inter-library loan requests.

Additional Library Support Service (AddLibS)

The AddLibS service offers support to Library users who may be part-time or distance learners, on placement or a year abroad, undertaking research or writing up away from Bristol, or who have short-term health problems, caring responsibilities or other major difficulties in accessing Library services. See the online information at **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/addlibs**; alternatively telephone (0117) 33 18124, or email **add-libs@bris.ac.uk**.

Library services for disabled users

The Library offers the following services for disabled users: book collection and postage service; extended loans; access to assistive technology; a photocopying/scanning service; an alternative format service; bookable private study rooms and a range of ergonomic equipment for use in the Library. There is a dedicated email address to request Library support. To register, please contact **lib-disability@bris.ac.uk** or telephone (0117) 92 88502. For more information see **bristol.ac.uk/library/using/disabledusers**.

Library services for dyslexic users

The Library offers the following services for dyslexic users: extended library loans; access to assistive technology; photocopying/scanning service; training in how to create your own accessible formats and bookable private study rooms. To register please email: **lib-disability@bris.ac.uk** or telephone (0117) 92 88502. For more information see **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/disabledusers**.

Library services for international students

The international librarian offers support to international students studying at the University of Bristol; see **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/international**.

Using other university libraries

Many UK university libraries allow vacation reading access upon production of your *U*Card. Term-time reading access may be possible via the SCONUL Access scheme, but you need to apply in advance by completing the online application form at **www.sconul.ac.uk/sconul-access**. See more information at: **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/using/membership/sconul**.

Contacts and help

All general library enquiries
Telephone: (0117) 92 88000
Email: **library-enquiries@bris.ac.uk**

Individual libraries:
bristol.ac.uk/library/study/libraries

Library website: www.bristol.ac.uk/library

Library Twitter: @BristolUniLib

Study skills and resources
Information literacy skills

Information literacy skills

During your studies at Bristol and in your subsequent career, you will need to develop expertise in finding, evaluating and using information effectively and ethically. This expertise is often referred to as 'information literacy'. Information literacy is not the same thing as IT literacy. Being information literate requires you to:

- understand what sort of information is required
- recognise where and how that information can be found, and develop an effective strategy for obtaining it
- use a variety of specialist online and printed resources – not just Google and the Library catalogue – to find the information you need
- compare and evaluate the information obtained from different sources
- use the information ethically by understanding and avoiding plagiarism – for example, by citing your sources correctly.

In order to develop your information literacy skills you are encouraged to take advantage of the resources listed below.

Timetabled sessions

The Library's team of faculty and subject librarians work with academic schools to provide introductory and in-depth information literacy sessions. Your academic school will give you details of sessions timetabled for your course.

If your school does not organise this, you can contact your subject librarian to arrange one.

Subject librarians

The subject librarians are here to help you make the most of what the Library offers. Please feel free to contact them at any time for further information or to ask for individual help. See **www.bristol.ac.uk/library/support/subjects** to find contact details for your subject librarian and view their subject web pages.

Self-study

- Information literacy: video tutorials
  www.bristol.ac.uk/studentsskills/content/ilitskills/tutorials

- Advice on finding and using information
  www.bristol.ac.uk/library/support/findinginfo

- Referencing and EndNote software
  www.bristol.ac.uk/library/support/findinginfo/literature-references

- Google Guide
  www.googleguide.com

Study skills and resources
IT skills

IT skills development

All students need a certain level of IT skills to meet the requirements of their programme, but enhancing these skills can be beneficial for all aspects of your life, not just your studies.

IT Services provide a wide range of training and learning resources to enable you to develop your skills in these areas, including:

- diagnostic tools to assess your current level of IT competence
- training courses and workshops on specific topics or software packages (eg email, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, EndNote, web authoring)
- training notes and other documentation
- self-paced learning resources for independent study
- individual help and advice: staff at the IT Service Desk in the Computer Centre (see below) can offer assistance with IT matters.

For further information on all the above, or to book a course, visit **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/learning**. Research postgraduates may attend any of the IT courses provided for staff.

Details of other training opportunities are available from the Student Skills web pages: **www.bristol.ac.uk/studentsskills**.

Publishing on the web

Social networking sites and blogs can be fun as well as providing a useful service to students. However, you need to consider the implications of publishing on the web both in terms of the personal information you disclose and also what you publish about others. Anything you write may be seen by your friends, family, lecturers and future employers. As a student of the University you are required to abide by University policy whenever you publish anything on the web, irrespective of whether you use University computing facilities. Please see:

- advice on personal safety at:
  www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/protectyou
- definitions of bullying and harassment at:
  www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/acceptablebehaviour.

Information security and 'phishing'

The internet exposes you to constant risks from malware and from criminals who want to defraud, harass or harm you. To combat this, you need a combination of common sense, security awareness and the right software tools. Visit the Information Security website at **www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec** for a range of information. The University recommends free antivirus software, and information is available at **www.bristol.ac.uk/software**.

You need to be alert to the possibility of 'phishing', ie attempts, generally via email messages, to trick you into divulging personal information such as bank account details, credit card numbers or passwords. Some phishing takes the form of bogus websites. Be cautious of any site which claims to be part of the University but is not within the **bris.ac.uk** or **bristol.ac.uk** domains.

The University will NEVER ask you to disclose your password in an email. You will only use your password to gain access to services. If you use any University websites to enter or update your personal information, always check for **https://** and **bris.ac.uk** or **bristol.ac.uk** in the security certificate, which you can see by clicking on the padlock in the toolbar or footer of the web page.

If you do inadvertently disclose any personal information, please change your password at **www.bristol.ac.uk/password** and tell the IT Service Desk immediately (see contact details below) so that they can protect your account and let you know what, if any, abuse has been committed.

Study skills and resources
MyBristol

MyBristol

bristol.ac.uk/mybristol
MyBristol is the University portal and gives you access to information, services and personalised data. You can access MyBristol via your smartphone to see mobile-enabled content.

What can you access in MyBristol?

- your University email
- your timetable
- Blackboard
- Library services
- remote University-managed desktop
- Student Info
- your print credit
- the University contact directory and much more…

Benefits of using MyBristol

- a wide range of information and services in a single place
- secure access to a number of different systems without the need to re-enter usernames and passwords
- immediate access to important information and announcements so that you know if something needs to be done
- ability to customise layout and design
- access from anywhere in the world.

Student Info

You are required to keep your Bristol, home and emergency contact details up-to-date so that you (or a family member, in the event of an emergency) can be contacted easily. You can view and update your personal details using the 'Student Info' system: **www.bristol.ac.uk/studentinfo** (also accessible via MyBristol).

You should also use Student Info to check:
- the units for which you are registered (taught programmes only)
- tuition fee, bursary, sponsorship and Student Loans Company information
- your personal examination timetable, where appropriate
- your unit results
- your final award details.

Student card (*U*Card)

Your *U*Card is valid for the duration of your programme of study. You must keep it in a safe place, carry it with you whenever you are on University property and show it to University staff on request. Do not lend it to others. Your *U*Card:
- proves that you are a registered student of the University of Bristol
- acts as your library card
- gives access to University buildings including libraries and computer rooms
- gives access to University sports facilities (if you have paid for a sport and activity pass)
- proves your membership of the National Union of Students
- gives student discounts for some shops and leisure activities.

In certain areas, access to and exit from buildings is controlled by cards. If this applies to you, your school will notify you.

Lost or stolen cards should be reported straight away to Card Services (part of Security Services) in Royal Fort Lodge, on the corner of Tyndall Avenue and University Walk. For opening hours and contact details please see Section 4. There is an administration charge for replacement cards.

Study skills and resources
IT services

IT services for students

Links to IT services relevant to students are available at **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/info/students.html**.

Computer rooms

Public computers are available in halls of residence, academic schools, libraries, the Students' Union building and central buildings such as the Computer Centre. Machines in University computer rooms give access to email, the internet, a range of software packages, and catalogues and databases in all subject areas. Further information on the facilities available in computer rooms and access to the Computer Centre can be found at **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/studyspaces**.

Email

The University has introduced a new email system provided by Google. You will benefit from enhanced storage space and the ability to retain your email address after you have left the University.

You should by now have started to use the University of Bristol email address issued to you when you registered. University communications will be sent to this email address, and you are therefore required to check your email frequently and regularly during term time and vacation periods (ideally daily in term time) so that you do not miss important messages.

You can access your email from anywhere with a web browser using MyBristol at **www.bristol.ac.uk/mybristol**. Advice on the use of email, and helpful tools, are available from **www.bristol.ac.uk/email**.

Central student filestore

Students are given at least 10GB of disk space on the central filestore. This networked filestore is less risky than using a USB stick: it is regularly backed up so your data will always be safe. You should be able to access this file space automatically after logging on to a computer in a teaching lab or computer room or through the student remote desktop. For further information, visit **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/applications/filestore**.

Blackboard

Blackboard is the University of Bristol's centrally supported online learning environment. Blackboard provides a range of tools for communication, collaboration and assessment as well as offering an online area to share resources like course notes and reading lists.

To log in to Blackboard directly go to **www.ole.bris.ac.uk** and enter your University username and password. You can also access Blackboard though the portal at **www.bristol.ac.uk/mybristol**.

Before you start using University computing facilities please familiarise yourself with the Information Security Policy – Acceptable Use at **www.bristol.ac.uk/infosec/policies/docs/isp-09.pdf** (see Section 7).

Study skills and resources
IT services

ResNet

ResNet provides internet access in all study-bedrooms in University accommodation. It is an extremely fast connection to the internet and the University network. Wireless is also available. Visit the website for details: **www.resnet.bristol.ac.uk**.

Wireless hotspots

The wireless service provides internet access from your own computer and from other devices such as tablets and smartphones. You can connect at hotspots in libraries, study spaces, common rooms and many other areas around the University. For details of these locations visit **www.wireless.bristol.ac.uk**.

The first time you want to connect, pick 'Bristol-Wifi-Setup' from the list of available wireless networks. Then go to **www.wireless.bristol.ac.uk** and click 'get connected'.

Accessing services when you are off-campus

It is possible to access most computing services from outside the University campus. For many resources the simplest method is to use the University portal, MyBristol, at **www.bristol.ac.uk/mybristol**, but for a full list of options visit **www.bristol.ac.uk/offsite**.

Printing and photocopying

Public printers in libraries, the Computer Centre and a number of other locations use a system called PAS (Printer Accounting Server). You can add credit to your print account via the Home tab in MyBristol at **www.bristol.ac.uk/mybristol**, at the issue desk of any library or at the Computer Centre. The same printer credit can also be used on photocopiers which are now available in most libraries. For further information visit **www.bristol.ac.uk/it-services/applications/printing**.

Software

There are a number of useful software packages available to students either free or at a discount, including email, office software and specialist academic packages. For more information see **www.bristol.ac.uk/software/management/obtainingsoftware.html**.

Laptop and mobile device clinic

The free student laptop and mobile device clinic aims to help resolve common problems and assist with connections to University services. For opening times and locations see **www.bristol.ac.uk/laptopclinic**.

AskIT – community IT support

AskIT is an online community for staff and students to help find solutions in using your own IT equipment to access University services. You can post a question, search for an answer or put forward a suggestion. Anyone can answer or respond. The site is moderated by IT Services staff. See **www.askit.bristol.ac.uk**.

IT Service Desk

The IT Service Desk is the first point of contact for all IT enquiries. It can help with:
- passwords and account information
- email
- supported equipment and site-licensed software
- sale of printing credit and printing account queries
- problems with Blackboard, Student Info and MyBristol
- accessing library resources such as journals and databases
- reporting problems with equipment maintained by IT Services
- queries regarding access to University facilities via wireless or proxy
- ResNet queries
- booking for student skills courses.

Contact
IT Service Desk
First Floor, Computer Centre, 5 Tyndall Avenue
Tel: (0117) 92 87870, Monday to Friday, 8am – 5.15pm
Email: **service-desk@bris.ac.uk**
Online self-service: **www.servicedesk.bristol.ac.uk**
Open for visitors Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

Study skills and resources
Language skills

English for Academic Purposes

The Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies (CELFS) offers a range of credit-based open units. The units for 2013/14 are:
- Academic Writing to Reading
- Communication for Academic and Professional Purposes
- Introduction to TEFL
- Academic Writing and Oral Skills for Research Students.

In addition, the Centre is running Academic Language and Literacy (ALL) programmes that support the academic language and study skills needs for students in Public Policy, Law and Management, and specific credit-based units for Engineering students. For more information, please see the CELFS website.

Richmond Building

The Centre now occupies state-of-the-art facilities on the fourth and fifth floors of the Richmond Building. All the University's students are invited to visit and use it, particularly if you are interested in working on your academic English or your study skills.

Contact
Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies
Richmond Building, Fourth Floor
105 Queen's Road
Tel: (0117) 33 18522
Email: **celfs-enquiries@bris.ac.uk**
Web: **www.bristol.ac.uk/english-language**
Open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

Applied Foreign Languages (AFL)

Applied Foreign Languages (AFL) is the name of the University-wide language programme at the University of Bristol. AFL offers students from across the University the opportunity to take a language course as part of their degree.

Open Units
All units are worth either 10 or 20 credit points. Language units can only be taken as part of a 120-credit point agreed programme of study.

Entry levels: beginners (ab initio), post-GCSE and post-'A' level

Languages available: Brazilian Portuguese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian and Spanish

All classes are subject to minimum numbers of enrolments.

Study in Continental Europe
Language for General Purposes and Language for Specific Purposes provide specialist language teaching for students taking degree programmes with Study in Continental Europe. If you are going to spend your third year studying in Europe you will, in most cases, need to take these language units in your first and/or second years (between 20 and 40 credit points, depending on your curriculum).

Languages available: French, German, Italian, Spanish

Contact
School of Modern Languages
17 Woodland Road
Tel: (0117) 33 18011
Email: **sml-afl@bris.ac.uk**
Web: **www.bristol.ac.uk/sml/courses/afl**
Open Monday to Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm
(Vacations: 9am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm)