

Students

The University is proud of its students. It recognises that, in order for them to make the most of their time here, they need a supportive environment, comprehensive facilities and a range of opportunities. The University is committed to providing a full range of support that will enable students to excel in every aspect of their lives at Bristol and to make their university career a genuinely transformative experience.

The University's priorities in this area are to:

- ensure a fair and transparent system of student representation that provides students with the opportunity to shape their educational and extra-curricular experience;
- support a vibrant, active and democratic Students' Union;
- ensure the provision of learning and skills opportunities that enhance students' future employability;
- offer a rewarding extra-curricular experience that provides for students' health, well-being and personal development;
- provide advice and support for students' personal welfare and ensure effective integration into the University and local community.

Bristol student team triumphs at MIT

An interdisciplinary team of students from the Bristol Centre for Complexity Sciences (BCCS) won a gold medal and a prize for Best Model after going head-to-head with 111 other teams at a prestigious international competition in the field of synthetic biology.

The team (comprising postgraduate and undergraduate students and staff from the BCCS, the School of Biological Sciences and the Departments of Biochemistry and Engineering Mathematics) travelled to the US to compete in the 2009 iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) Jamboree at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Having won a bronze medal and the Best Model prize at the 2008 iGEM Jamboree, this year they retained the Best Model prize and upgraded their medal to gold.

The team's 2009 project, 'Vesecure', aims to improve communication between bacteria by developing new methods of packaging signals – a technique that could potentially play a role in many different fields including drug delivery. The team created tools to put signals into parcels called outer membrane vesicles, enabling multiple signals to be delivered simultaneously. They used computer modelling to demonstrate this, and developed laboratory tools for the packaging of signals – tools that may have much broader applications in the future.

Enterprising students inspire school kids

Among the dozens of societies run through the Students' Union are two student enterprise societies – the Social Enterprise Project and Bristol Entrepreneurs. During the spring term, members of these societies visited Brislington Enterprise College to talk to pupils about entrepreneurial career options, and set them a challenge to design and market a new ethical food product. It is hoped that the scheme will develop into a city-wide, student-run annual programme.

Good works: Bristol students in the charitable and voluntary sector

Students at Bristol have a long history of community work and fundraising: the first raising and giving (RAG) event was held in 1925. The Students' Union emphasises to its members the importance of escaping the 'student bubble' and engaging with the local community in a positive way – as well as developing and sharpening a range of skills to complement their academic work and enhance their CV.

Students continued

RAG

In the year 2009/10, RAG activities raised a total of £252,446 through a varied programme that included street collections, sponsored activities such as skydiving, trekking and 'jailbreaking' and the annual RAG procession. Of this, £8,684 went to local charities.

A sponsored RAG climb of Mount Kilimanjaro raised £9,000 towards the Dorothy Hodgkin Scholarship – offered jointly by the University and the Windle Trust – which enables students from war-affected parts of Africa to undertake a postgraduate course at Bristol. The University waives the student's tuition fees, and the Windle Trust pays the travel expenses; students raise money for the living expenses and accommodation of a scholar, and the sum is match-funded by the Alumni Foundation. The most recent recipient of the Dorothy Hodgkin Scholarship is Severio Sebit, a student from Sudan who fled the country's civil war when he was 12 years old and is now studying for an MSc in Economics, Finance and Management.

SCA

Student Community Action (SCA) is a volunteering organisation founded in 1970 to complement RAG, co-ordinate and train student volunteers and develop links with the Bristol community. During 2009/10, SCA ran 24 projects involving over 1,400 volunteers, and held 16 volunteer training programmes.

One of the SCA projects, Pitstop, received a Children in Need grant to support its programme of day trips and activities for teenagers with learning and physical disabilities. Pitstop helps provide a supportive community in which the teenagers can develop social skills and form friendships with others that they can relate to, and encourages them to build key skills in independent living.

James Ashton-Bell, an undergraduate in the Department of Politics, received the Inspire Bristol 2009 Enterprise and Innovation Award for his volunteer work on the SCA's Primary Schools Project, which sends volunteers into schools to help children with reading, writing and numeracy skills. Under his management, the scheme – which began with a handful of volunteers in three schools – now involves over 100 student volunteers in 30 schools.

Bristol medic heads BMA student committee

Nicholas Deakin, a third-year Bristol medical student, has been elected co-chairman of the British Medical Association (BMA) Medical Students Committee, which represents more than 22,000 BMA student members from UK medical schools on a wide range of issues affecting medical students. Members of the committee also sit on policy subcommittees that deal with issues relating to the finance, education and welfare of medical students across the UK.



Top: Severio Sebit, recipient of the Dorothy Hodgkin Scholarship
Bottom: Nicholas Deakin, co-chairman of the BMA Medical Students Committee

Student awards and prizes

Complexity student wins poster prize

Chris Musselle, a postgraduate student in the Bristol Centre for Complexity Sciences, won the Best Student Poster prize at the 2009 European Conference on Complex Systems. The poster, entitled 'Malware defence using artificial immune systems', suggests a new method of detecting malicious computer programs, such as viruses, that mirrors the workings of the human immune system.

Boeing recognises Engineering students

Six students in the Faculty of Engineering – Rafic Ajaj, William Costin, Richard Vigars, Corin Rathbone, Ross Turner and Alexey Likhoded – won awards from Boeing for the exceptional quality of their project work. Four of the students won prizes for the best final-year or MSc projects; the other two won a highly prestigious Boeing scholarship worth £3,000. The awards mark the beginning of a new relationship with Boeing, after the company chose the University of the Bristol as one of a select cohort of universities that will support the development of its intellectual capital and provide continuing education for its employees.

Excellence in engineering

Robert Matthews, a PhD student on the Aquatest Research Programme at the University's Water and Health Research Centre, received an award from the Worshipful Company of Engineers. He won the 2010 Fiona and Nicholas Hawley Excellence in Environmental Engineering Award for developing a low-cost, portable incubator that maintains the temperature of water samples without relying on electricity.

Fellowship for Vet School PhD

Jo Edgar, a PhD student in the Department of Clinical Veterinary Science, received a prestigious Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) Fellowship from the Institute of Food Science and Technology. The Fellowship enables her to work on a science-based project in POST at the Houses of Parliament.

Garden History prize makes four in a row

Laura Mayer, a PhD student in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, won the prestigious Garden History Society Annual Essay Prize – becoming the fourth Bristol winner in an unbroken run. She won the 2010 prize for 'Landscape as legacy', an exploration of the influence of Elizabeth Percy on the landscape at Alnwick. The judges praised Mayer's 'engagement with the landscape, her close analysis of the archival material and her lively yet scholarly writing which challenged accepted interpretations of the site'.

Students devise winning low-carbon energy solution

A team of Bristol students were joint winners of the RWE npower 'Energy Challenge', a national competition to devise new ways of delivering low-carbon energy for the future. The 'Bristainable Energy' team's entry included proposals to develop more renewable energy and an innovative fixed-price green energy tariff. The Bristol team tied with the University of Birmingham for first place.



Top: The 'Bristainable Energy' team
Bottom: Laura Mayer, winner of the Garden History Society Annual Essay Prize