

# Birmingham

[www.birmingham.org.uk](http://www.birmingham.org.uk)  
[www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk)



*Birmingham's Grade II listed Council House and the famous 'Flooie in the Jacuzzi' fountain*

Studying in Birmingham opens up the world. For students from outside the UK, it offers an opportunity to improve English skills while taking advantage of excellent professional opportunities. For all students, studying in Britain's largest regional city offers all the excitement, diversity and culture of a major city, without the cost of living in the capital.

## The city

Birmingham is unique. Situated in the heart of England, its bustling Chinese Quarter and famous 'Balti mile' are obvious testaments to its multicultural nature. There are a dazzling array of restaurants, shops, pubs and clubs on offer, plus world-class sporting events and, of course, live music.

Yet when it all gets too much, in just 15 minutes you can be out of the city and enjoying tranquil countryside. Popular West Midlands destinations such as Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick Castle, Ironbridge, the Cotswolds and the Malvern Hills are all close by.

Find out more: [www.visitheartofengland.com](http://www.visitheartofengland.com)

## Getting here and getting around

With its own international airport and two major rail arteries, getting to and from Birmingham is simple. Once you're here, the city's manageable size – around one million people – makes it friendly and fast to get around. Within the city, local rail and bus coverage is excellent and there are plans to extend the city's tram line. Plus, Birmingham's location makes it an ideal base for musicians travelling to engagements elsewhere in the UK (London is one-and-a-half hours by train).

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*Our percussion duo, Maraca2, opening the 2007 European Athletics Indoor Championships at the National Indoor Arena*

# Arts scene

Birmingham boasts a superb arts scene. Local theatres include the Hippodrome (home of Birmingham Royal Ballet), the Alexandra Theatre and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre with its associated studio theatre, The Door.

The Midland Arts Centre, set in Cannon Hill Park, stages a more eclectic range of theatrical events and films as well as workshops and exhibitions. From mega-plex StarCity to the fabulously refurbished Electric Cinema, film fans can enjoy everything from arthouse to Hollywood to Bollywood.

The city also has some of the finest art galleries in the country – the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, housing the world’s leading collection of Pre-Raphaelite art, contrasting with the modern, innovative work on show at the Ikon Gallery. Each September, Birmingham’s ArtsFest, the UK’s largest free arts festival, attracts more than 100,000 visitors; and our own New Generation Arts Festival in June presents the best work from emerging artists to audiences drawn from across the Midlands and beyond (see p86).

## Where to see, hear and perform

From traditional Irish to rock, contemporary classical to bhangra, you can find it here. Many of Birmingham’s major music venues are just minutes away from us, including:

- ⊙ *Symphony Hall*: 2262 seats, home to the renowned City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO)
- ⊙ *Town Hall*: 1088 seats, Grade 1 listed, reopening October 2007 following a £35m renovation
- ⊙ Our own venues, particularly the *Adrian Boult Hall* and *Recital Hall* are used by many of Birmingham’s principal concert promoters (see p24)
- ⊙ *CBSO Centre*: a flexible performance space used by a variety of groups, including Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG), Birmingham Jazz and Birmingham Symphonic Winds, to name a few
- ⊙ *Carling Academy & National Indoor Arena*: together with the *National Exhibition Centre* (located about 10 miles out of town), these venues host a huge variety of international artists, from living legends to today’s hottest bands

Due in part to the resourcefulness of our own students and alumni, jazz is now flourishing in the city, with several jazz nights in local venues providing performance platforms for our students and visiting artists. As well as the larger venues mentioned above, intimate performance spaces dotted around the city centre and further afield host a variety of bands and many pubs double as venues. *The Drum* in Aston is a particular hot-spot for jazz, owing to homegrown talent Soweto Kinch’s Live Box sessions.

# Getting involved

Although we aim to provide a full range of performing ensembles and activities to keep you busy at the Conservatoire, one of the great advantages of studying in Birmingham is the huge array of excellent professional development opportunities that will be available to you as a student or graduate.

- ⦿ **Music Services** – one of the largest services in the country, Birmingham Music Service organises and administers 21 Central Ensembles and 27 Area Ensembles. Partnerships also exist with Dudley, Staffordshire and Oxfordshire Music Services. Many of our students teach for the Music Service and find the work both challenging and highly rewarding.
- ⦿ For aspiring singers and organists, Birmingham's many churches, as well as its Oratory and two cathedrals, St Chad's (Roman Catholic) and St Philip's (Anglican), offer a number of **choral and organ scholarships**.
- ⦿ Alongside the major players (CBSO, BCMG etc), a variety of **performing ensembles** and organisations within Birmingham and the West Midlands offer the chance to get involved at non-professional, semi-professional or professional level, for example:

## Orchestras & Instrumental Ensembles

Birmingham Chamber Orchestra [www.birminghamchamberorchestra.com](http://www.birminghamchamberorchestra.com)

Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra [www.bpo.org.uk](http://www.bpo.org.uk)

Birmingham Symphonic Winds [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk)

CBSO Youth Orchestra [www.cbsoyouthorchestra.com](http://www.cbsoyouthorchestra.com)

Central England Ensemble [www.centralenglandensemble.co.uk](http://www.centralenglandensemble.co.uk)

Chandos Symphony Orchestra [www.chandos.org.uk](http://www.chandos.org.uk)

Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra [www.myjo.co.uk](http://www.myjo.co.uk)

National Saxophone Choir of Great Britain [www.saxchoir.com](http://www.saxchoir.com)

Queen's Park Sinfonia [www.queensparksinfonia.org.uk](http://www.queensparksinfonia.org.uk)

Sinfonia of Birmingham [www.sinfonia.org.uk](http://www.sinfonia.org.uk)

## Choral & Operatic Groups

Birmingham Bach Choir [www.birmingham.bachchoir.com](http://www.birmingham.bachchoir.com)

Birmingham Choral Union [www.birminghamchoralunion.org.uk](http://www.birminghamchoralunion.org.uk)

Birmingham Festival Choral Society [www.bfcs.org.uk](http://www.bfcs.org.uk)

City of Birmingham Symphony Choruses [www.cbso.co.uk/choruses](http://www.cbso.co.uk/choruses)

Ex Cathedra [www.ex-cathedra.org](http://www.ex-cathedra.org)

Operamus (youth opera) [www.operamus.co.uk](http://www.operamus.co.uk)

Heart of England Singers [www.heart-of-england-singers.org.uk](http://www.heart-of-england-singers.org.uk)

## Composition and Contemporary Performance

CoMA (Contemporary Music for Amateurs) West Midlands [www.coma.org](http://www.coma.org)

- ⦿ Famous for its diversity, Birmingham supports a wide range of organisations delivering **music within the community**, as well as one-off projects, including:  
The Drum [www.the-drum.org.uk](http://www.the-drum.org.uk)  
mac [www.macarts.co.uk](http://www.macarts.co.uk)  
Musicate [www.musicate.org](http://www.musicate.org)  
Sampad [www.sampad.org.uk](http://www.sampad.org.uk)  
Sound Futures [www.soundfutures.org](http://www.soundfutures.org)  
Sound it Out [www.sounditout.co.uk](http://www.sounditout.co.uk)  
and many others...

# Birmingham on a Budget

Finance is becoming an increasingly important factor in deciding where to study. Home to four universities and a number of specialist training institutions, Birmingham is a student-friendly city. There are plenty of places offering part-time work to music students, including venues such as Symphony Hall and the CBSO Centre, as well as our own venues.

In terms of making the most of the city, you'll find that most of Birmingham's major attractions offer free or reduced-price entry for students, with some music venues offering special discounts for those studying at the Conservatoire.

## Accommodation

Once you have accepted a place at the Conservatoire, the University's Accommodation Service will offer you help in finding somewhere to live, either in one of its Halls of Residence or in other University or private accommodation. Full details and application forms are usually sent in June to all candidates holding offers of places. If you live a distance from Birmingham which precludes commuting, you will normally be guaranteed University accommodation for your first year.

Conservatoire students are most frequently housed in the city centre, close to the Conservatoire. Our own Open Days (see p9) usually include an opportunity to visit a Hall of Residence as part of the Conservatoire tour. For further information about University accommodation, please visit [www.uce.ac.uk/accommodation](http://www.uce.ac.uk/accommodation)

Apart from University accommodation, a wide variety of housing options are available across the city and the cost of living is relatively low. Renting a private house or flat tends to vary between £55 and £90 per week.

## Tuition Fees

Unfortunately, at the time of going to press, tuition fees for 2008 entry had not yet been finalised. As a guide only, most 2007 entry tuition fees are listed on individual course pages. Please note that tuition fees for overseas students are under discussion and are likely to increase in 2008. All 2008 entry tuition fees will be posted on our website as soon as they are available.

You may find it helpful to speak to a financial adviser in our Student Services Unit, who can provide up-to-the-minute information on tuition fees and bursaries. The Unit also publishes a Guide to Fees and Funding, containing practical advice for prospective students. Contact Student Services for a copy (T: 0121 331 5588 / [student.services@uce.ac.uk](mailto:student.services@uce.ac.uk)) or visit their website: [www.ssv.uce.ac.uk](http://www.ssv.uce.ac.uk)

In accordance with requirements issued by the Office for Fair Access, the University publishes an Access Agreement, available on the OFFA website ([www.offa.org.uk](http://www.offa.org.uk)). An annual bursary (currently £512) is available to all undergraduate students on full or part state support and further support may be possible.

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