Welcome to the Birmingham School of Acting - Foundation in Acting

Dear student,

I am delighted to welcome you to the Birmingham School of Acting. We’re looking forward to welcoming you and helping you to settle into the School, your course and your new environment.

Everyone is always a bit nervous about starting university, this is a good sign, and it means you’re keen to do well and make the most of this exciting opportunity. We’re all very friendly, and you’ll soon settle in very quickly. Remember, everyone is in the same boat!

Your personal tutor is a key person to get to know in the first few weeks, they can help with any queries, worries or concerns.

Please take the time to read the information below as it will help you settle in to the University more efficiently. Further information can be found on our welcome pages, including activities during Welcome Week at www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/welcome-week.

Finally I’d like to wish you the best of luck for the start of your course. You are now a part of the Birmingham School of Acting and Birmingham City University academic community, and we look forward to working in partnership with you to help you succeed.

With best wishes,

Professor Stephen Simms
Head of Birmingham School of Acting

Your first day with us
Your programme is based at the University’s City Centre Campus. To find out more about facilities, latest developments and accessibility at your campus, along with maps, travel directions and car parking arrangements, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/maps-and-campuses/city-centre-campus.

Your first day will begin with the following welcome session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Tuesday, 20 September 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Birmingham School of Acting, Patricia Yardley Studio, City Centre Campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important that you attend this welcome session to receive essential information about studying at the University.
Faculty Welcome at the Birmingham Hippodrome

Wednesday 21 September, 10.00-12.00

You’re about to join one of the largest and most distinctive arts faculties in the country, amid one of the UK’s most vibrant cultural scenes. This is your welcome to all nine Schools in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media. It’s a brilliant opportunity to meet students from other disciplines and learn about the city’s amazing arts environment. You’ll be hearing from Faculty Dean Professor David Roberts and from Fiona Allan, Artistic Director of the Birmingham Hippodrome, the UK’s most attended theatre. There will be free coffee and late breakfast; information about job opportunities, backstage tours, and Birmingham’s arts scene; and above all the chance to meet student actors, musicians, writers, artists, fashion and product designers, architects, stage managers, media trainees, illustrators, film-makers and animators, and a whole host of other creative people.

You’ll be guided from your home School to the Hippodrome by staff and students in time for refreshments. Then we’ll host the main event in the amazing Hippodrome auditorium. You’ll have plenty of time to move on to the city centre campus and experience the Student Union Fair afterwards.

We look forward to seeing you there. Please use this link to register: https://bookings.birminghamhippodrome.com/single/SelectSeating.aspx?p=27310&promo=BCUCONSERVATOIRE

Student Essentials

Timetable

Please find below a copy of the induction timetable for your first week with us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Staff required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of School welcome/ Course team meeting</td>
<td>Tue 20/09/16</td>
<td>10.00-10.30</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>S Simms/Course team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour/Housekeeping/ Programme Handbooks</td>
<td>Tue 20/09/16</td>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>T Francis/L Pettifor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services talk</td>
<td>Tue 20/09/16</td>
<td>11.00-12.00</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>L Papillon/Dr White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome from the whole School team</td>
<td>Tue 20/09/16</td>
<td>13.00-13.30</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services/Student Union talk</td>
<td>Tue 20/09/16</td>
<td>13.30-14.30</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>SU/S Services team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of the Arts, Design &amp; Media Welcome</td>
<td>Wed 21/09/16</td>
<td>10.00-12.00</td>
<td>Birmingham Hippodrome, main theatre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free afternoon for Freshers Fayre</td>
<td>Wed 21/09/16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT support team (CICT) talk</td>
<td>Thu 22/09/16</td>
<td>14.00-14.30</td>
<td>Parkside P120</td>
<td>IT team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic assessment</td>
<td>Fri 23/09/16</td>
<td>10.30-13.30</td>
<td>BSA - Patricia Yardley Studio</td>
<td>Course team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You will be able to access your main timetable during Induction Week on the homepage of iCity (icity.bcu.ac.uk). To get a longer-term view of your timetable, choose ‘Your Timetable’ from the top left menu.

iCity is the University’s web portal for staff and students. You can use it to access news, information and services. You can also access your timetable from the iBCU app, available on Apple iOS, Android and Windows. Search your app store for ‘iBCU’ and log in using the same details as above.

You can log in using the username and password stated in your online enrolment invitation email.

**Programme Handbook**
Your Programme Handbook contains detailed information including fees, placements and the content of your programme. You will be given a hard copy of your Handbook during your induction and links to access this electronically.

**School Office**
You can find your School Office off Reception, Millennium Point Building, City Centre Campus. There is student support available from 08:00 am – 18:00 pm, Monday to Friday.

**Your University ID card**
Remember to keep your University ID card with you at all times as you will need it to access all campuses and libraries, as well as using printers on campus. Using your ID card also helps us to record your attendance at teaching sessions, making sure you get the best out of your studies.

**Your University email address**
Your University e-mail address will be used for ALL communications. Remember to check your e-mail account regularly to ensure that you don’t miss important updates and information about your studies. You can even [link it to your smartphone](mailto:).

**Rules and regulations**
One of your responsibilities as a student at Birmingham City University is to follow the rules and regulations which apply to all students. It’s really important that you’re aware of these, so we’ve picked out some of the key areas to help you: [www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/rules-and-regulations](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/rules-and-regulations)

**Key University Services**
There’s a lot to get your head around in your first few weeks at university, but don’t worry - help is at hand. We have a number of services at the University to help you get started, find answers to questions and receive general advice and support.

More information: [icity.bcu.ac.uk/marketing/Student-Essentials](http://icity.bcu.ac.uk/marketing/Student-Essentials)

**And finally...**
Please see the appendices below for additional information that is key to your programme. We very much hope you enjoy your time with us at the University! For more information on what you can get involved in when you get here, visit [www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/welcome-week](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/welcome-week)
APPENDICES
1 – Key Programme Information – modules
2 - Key Programme Information – term dates
3 - Key Programme Information – reading lists and essential learning resources
4 - Welcome letter from the Birmingham School of Acting Student Council
5 - Course Disclaimer
6 - Who’s who
7 - Attendance monitoring
Appendix 1 – Key Programme Information - Modules

There are no placements attached to this course.
The Foundation in Acting course is divided into the following areas:

1. **Acting Skills**

Divided into:
- *Acting Theories* - these classes form an introduction to the application of the principles of Stanislavski’s System to the creation of a character and performance
- *Scene work* - this strand of the course is designed to help the actor “lift” the character from the page to the stage and to understand the “reactive” nature of acting. These classes address the essential questions of acting: “What do I want?” and “What do I do to get it?”
- *Improvisation / Actor’s Movement* - classes will explore the release of imagination in a physical field and the beginnings of uninhibited creativity
- *Project Work* - there are four acting projects: Story-telling; Musical Theatre Styles; Shakespeare and Contemporary scenes. They are designed to help the student actor to integrate the essential core technical skills of acting, voice and movement within a rehearsal and performance experience. They will help the students to learn to take responsibility for independent learning and begin to develop a personal working system.

2. **Vocal Skills**

An introduction to the safe use of the voice, one of the actor’s most important tools:
- *Voice* - these classes will help the students to understand their own anatomy and the mechanics of speech. Students will begin to explore their individual potential and become aware of the amount of work required in order to achieve authenticity in the creation of character.
- *Singing* - an introduction to the creation of character and performance in the medium of song. The student entering training needs to be able to access their voice without fear or inhibition. These classes are principally aimed at helping the students to achieve that.

3. **Physical Skills**

Actors need to be in touch with their physical imagination – to be able to allow the body to transform truthfully. This element of the course is divided into three sections:
- *Body Conditioning* - an intensive aerobic and cardio-vascular workout for the whole body and is designed to develop fitness and stamina
- *Social Dance* - an introduction to dance styles typical of different periods in history
- *Jazz / Stomp* - an introduction to rhythm, co-ordination and free expression.

In addition: *Stage Combat* – elementary work in both unarmed and armed combat for the stage.

4. **Audition preparation and professional studies**

- Audition preparation – advice on the “do’s” and “don’ts” of auditioning for drama school
Theatre visits/back-stage tours

Stratford-upon-Avon workshops – students will have the opportunity to visit Stratford and undertake workshops with the Shakespeare Trust and Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon

Living away from home – life skills – Advice and guidance in the form of lecture and pastoral assistance will be offered to the students to help them deal with being away from home and family. This will include advice on health matters and also financial advice.

IMPORTANT
Please note that because the Foundation in Acting course lasts for 20 weeks, students studying the course are not eligible for an exemption from Council Tax charges with Birmingham City Council. Please discuss the implications of this with the Course Director or with the Accommodations Officer based within the Student’s Union.

Appendix 2 – Key Programme Information - Term dates

**Autumn Term 2016**
- Induction: Tuesday 20th September 2016
- Fresher’s Week: 17th to 25th September 2016
- Diagnostics: 23rd September 2016
- Course starts: 26th September 2016
- Reading week: 31st October – 4th November 2016
- Term Finishes: 9th December 2016

**Spring Term 2017**
- Start: 9th January 2017
- Reading week: 13th – 17th February 2017
- Finish: 31st March 2017

Please ensure that you do not book holidays on or near finish/start dates of terms, without first checking with your Course Director, as some dates may change.

*Birmingham School of Acting operates a strict attendance policy that prohibits taking holiday or other commitments during term time.*

Any absences must be recorded on the Absence Request forms available at Reception.

Appendix 3 – Key Programme Information – Reading lists and essential learning resources

**Reading lists**
These are books and DVD’s which we consider will be most helpful to you in your studies. Although you may like to have your own copies to refer to throughout your training and career, it is not a requirement of the course that you purchase them; they are available from our libraries and you should be able to obtain them through your own local library.

You may find it useful to read some of the indicative reading books before commencing your course, as they will give you a head start into appreciating the work you will tackle in your first year.

**Special notice**
We are very pleased to be able to offer you in advance a welcoming gift a copy of one of your key texts:
This will be handed out to you during induction week.

Indicative Reading


**DVDs**


You will also be well-advised to spend time watching videos and DVDs of performance work, going to the cinema and reading biographical works about prominent figures in the recent and not so recent history of the profession you are seeking to enter. It is impossible to be “over-prepared” for your training and career.

Lastly and by no means least, it is essential that you read plays and become informed and excited about the vastness and diversity of the world of theatre and performance. There are a huge number of play texts in the reference section of the resources room. These plays must not be taken out of the building, but you should make it your business to read them here.
Learning resources

Equipment

You should acquire or have access to the following items – the notebook and pens should be brought with you on your first day:

- Thesaurus
- Concise Oxford Dictionary
- Complete Shakespeare 2nd Edition (Edited Stanley Wells, Clarendon Press, Oxford) paperback is acceptable
- Notebook (you will be expected to take and keep notes)
- Ring binder/wallet file (to keep hand-outs safe)
- Pens/pencils/pencil sharpener/rubber
- If you find it useful, an electronic device with voice recorder (e.g. MP3 player)

There will be some required make-up needed later on in your course. Details will be supplied at the due time.

Clothing

All students are required to dress appropriately for all classes and rehearsals. Clothing should be black (neutral) for all classes. It should be practical and comfortable, with no low neck-lines. Trousers should cover underwear and the abdomen appropriately. You will also be expected to change from external to internal footwear before entering the studios. Remember, this is a working environment.

If you have any movement clothes that you think may be suitable, do not buy anything new until you commence your course.

Essential male and female clothing:

Minimum of 3 sets of black clothing:

- Long & short sleeved black tops that are suitable for movement (t-shirts or jumpers)
- Black tracksuit trousers
- Close fitting lycra/sports-wear or leotards, footless tights or leggings

Pair of trainers (to be worn in stage combat/body conditioning classes)

Toiletries and towel for showering

Optional male & female:

Large sports bag

Tap or jazz shoes (only if you already have these)

Additional essential female clothing:

Practice skirt (Full-length circular wrap-over skirt to floor level (to be made from any dark rich, plain coloured material, preferably heavy wool or similar - please see pattern on next page).
White long sleeved blouse/shirt

Pair of black shoes with leather ankle bar (please see following picture)

**Optional female clothing:**
Corset

It would be desirable for girls to have a black dress for movement classes, either sleeved or sleeveless; with easy flowing skirt to mid-thigh (for presentations).

**Additional essential male clothing:**
White long sleeve shirt

Formal, waisted, black trousers (NOT hipsters)

Pair of formal gentleman’s black shoes (hard soled NOT rubber - see picture example)

**Compulsory:** Dance belt or jock strap - must be worn in all movement sessions.

**Male clothing – Optional**
Waistcoat - desirable but not essential

Formal jacket preferably black but grey/blue is fine

**Dress code**

The Birmingham School of Acting operates a strict dress code which includes:

- the removal of all body piercings and jewellery before classes
- the removal of heavy make-up
- inappropriate clothing such as jeans, scarves, hats and belts must not be worn in classes.

Clothing should have your name clearly marked and be kept clean and well maintained.

Should you be required to wear a wedding ring in production, it is your responsibility to purchase this. It can be obtained from ‘the Costume Shop’, at a cost of approximately £2.

Not having the correct clothing or your equipment, for the start of term, may seriously impede your learning in certain classes.

If you have more than one strenuous/physical class in the day, you will need to shower and change your clothing. Shower facilities are available within the School.

**Wrap-Over Skirt Pattern (Medium)**

This should be made up in a medium weight fabric such as poly/cotton/wool mix, in a dark colour, preferably black.

*(See diagram)* Cut out 5 panel pieces. Sew together, with a 1cm/ ½ inch seam allowance, to form a curved flat piece (4 seams). Hem the 2 side edges.

Cut out the waistband. This should be long enough to go round your waist twice and tie. Attach to the waist edge of the skirt with all raw edges inside, leaving a ‘tail’ at each end for tying.

Hem the bottom edge of the skirt so that it is just below ankle length, without brushing the floor.

If a larger or smaller size is required the measurements may be reduced or added to (per panel) by 2-5 centimetres (1-2 inches).

i.e. medium (as above) = 50” at waist (approximately 2 panels should overlap)

Smaller 8” x 5 = 40”
Larger 12" x 5 = 60"

Example of style of female shoe required - Capezio Manhattan
Appendix 4 - Welcome letter from the Birmingham School of Acting Student Council

Dear Student,

A very warm welcome to BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL OF ACTING! Congratulations on receiving a place to study here. You will soon be embarking on a wonderful journey full of challenges, hard work and fun. We, as the Student Council are here to support you throughout your time here at BSA. Each year BSA students elect a student council who will act as a connection to the wider university network. The council also carries out other tasks including accommodation support and, of course, social events. The first of these social events that you will encounter will be BCU’s Fresher’s week 2016 and Birmingham School of Acting’s famous ‘FAFFY’ (find a friendly first year) house party, which is traditionally hosted by 2nd or 3rd year students in one of the student houses.

Freshers’ 2016 – Your Student Union

By being a part of BCU we are fortunate to get the same benefits that the university students do, such as use of the facilities including the newly built Curzon library which has a great selection of plays and study books. Certain facilities are also available to us through the BCU Student’s Union including NUS student ID cards, local public transport information and insurance through the NUS insurers ‘Endsleigh’ for home, personal, car, bike etc. For further information about what’s available to us through Birmingham City University and BCU’s Student union feel free to contact any member of the student council or BCUSU.

The Student Union has been working hard to ensure this year’s Fresher’s is the biggest and the best yet! Fresher’s 2016 will be kicking off on Saturday 17th September with the Welcome Party at the O2 academy in Birmingham and the events will finish with the closing party on Monday 26th September. Throughout the week there will be various events including the Aloha Beach Party and the BCU bar crawl. You can look up all the events and book tickets here:-

http://www.bcusu.com/welcome/welcome-week-2016/freshers-events-2016/

Any events exclusive to BSA students will be posted on the Facebook page in the coming weeks. We would highly recommend attending the Fresher’s events throughout BSA and BCU as it’s a great
opportunity to meet fellow students on both your course and other courses and let your hair down before the hard work begins!

**Social Networking- Facebook**

It is advisable if you don’t already have Facebook to get yourself connected, even if you only use it for BSA, as this is the primary way that we, the student council, get in contact with you and on some courses the Tutors set up a page so they can keep you updated.

Each year a group is created for incoming students to get to know each other, ask questions and socialise before classes start in September. The group is open to any incoming student and all current students at BSA, so there are plenty of people to get advice from and chat to before you start! You may wish, once you know who is on your course from the Facebook group, to set up a group for your own course/year.

Please use the Facebook group link below to meet new people, ask questions and find out more about what to expect from the wonderful journey you are beginning! I, and the other council members will also be using this page to update you with notices including Fresher’s and social events. [https://www.facebook.com/groups/1075244755890431/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1075244755890431/) or alternatively search ‘Birmingham School of Acting 2016-2017’ on Facebook under groups.

If you don’t want to ask your questions on the Facebook page please feel free to contact myself or any of the student council or Student Reps/SALS that I will introduce you to below.

**Meet Your Student Council**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student President:</td>
<td>Rianna Ash (3rd Year BA Acting)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President:</td>
<td>Charlotte Bell (3rd Year BA Applied Performance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social events co-ordinator/Treasurer:</td>
<td>Josie Rylance (3rd Year BA Applied Performance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Academic Leaders**

Each course is supported by Student Academic Leaders (SALs) who are members of your class. They are there to communicate on your behalf with the Course Director and School Academic Board. The current SALs are:

**BA (Hons) Acting**

- Rianna Ash (Rianna.Ash@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year
- Cormac Elliot (Cormac.Elliot@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year
- Hugo Von Fragstein (Hugo.Vonfragstein@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 2nd Year
- Mara Huf (Mara.Huf@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 2nd Year

**BA (Hons) Stage Management**

- Sophie Spillane (Sophie.spillane@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year

**BA (Hons) Applied Performance**

- Josie Rylance (Josie.Rylance@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year
- Charlotte Bell (Charlotte.Bell4@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year
- Zoe Hedge (Zoe.Hedge@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 3rd Year

**MFA Acting (The British Tradition)**

- Emily Dabczynski (Emily.Dabczynski@mail.bcu.ac.uk) - 2nd Year

Appointments to the SAL role will be made in October for Foundation in Acting and MA Professional Voice Practice courses.

**Student Reps**

The school also has two Student Reps, appointed from BSA students by the Students Union, who are there to represent the whole of Birmingham School of Acting within Birmingham City University.

The School Reps for 2016-2017 are:

- Rianna Ash (Rianna.Ash@mail.bcu.ac.uk)
- Hugo Von Fragstein (Hugo.Vonfragstein@mail.bcu.ac.uk)

We hope you have a lovely summer and I can’t wait to meet you all in September! Should you have any questions or concerns before September please don’t hesitate to contact me. Any course concerns
or anything regarding administrative queries please go directly to your course director or email the school. 
All the best,

Rianna Ash
Student President
Birmingham School of Acting
Rianna.Ash@mail.bcu.ac.uk

Appendix 5 - Course Disclaimer

Copy for information: YOU WILL BE ASKED TO SIGN A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT ON THE DAY OF COURSE REGISTRATION

I understand and agree to the following:

- Students must accept they will be ‘play as cast’ (i.e. have no approval rights regarding casting decisions)
- Students do not have script approval
- Students must accept that they cannot be guaranteed a lead role in any project/workshop or production
- Students must accept that all classes and rehearsals are considered calls, and are therefore mandatory and subject to the Birmingham School of Acting attendance policy
- Students do not have approval of tutors or directors to which they are assigned
- Students must be aware that Birmingham School of Acting reserves the right to choose plays from the history of world drama which may be seen as controversial or challenging, or which may confront issues of politics, religion, and sexuality
- An open-minded, un-prejudiced, uninhibited freedom of approach is expected from all students
- Students must not knowingly put themselves in a position where they can be injured during their training, i.e. extreme sporting activities. Students who are injured this way must accept that this may affect their ability to participate in their training, complete assessments and may also affect their potential casting in public shows
- Students must be aware of the fact that many plays for stage and screen require characters to smoke. However, it is the policy of Birmingham School of Acting not to force any student to smoke in performance against their will, even if the script states that the character smokes. Please note, if your character does smoke in performance, you are not allowed to smoke in rehearsal, as this is against the law.

I have read and accept the above information.

Signed: ______________________________
Print Name: ______________________________
Date: ______________________________
Appendix 6 - School Who’s Who

A full list of School staff will be provided for you in your Programme/Course Guide (Student Handbook) which you will receive as part of your induction. In the meantime, below are some of the key people you can contact if you have any queries before the start of your course:

Professor Stephen Simms  
Director / Head of School  
Head of Acting Department  
0121 331 7223  
Stephen.simms@bcu.ac.uk

Danièle Sanderson  
Deputy Director / Head of School  
Course Director – BA (Hons) Acting  
Course Director – Foundation in Acting  
0121 331 7224  
Daniele.sanderson@bcu.ac.uk

Tim Francis  
Programme Administrator  
0121 331 7559  
tim.francis@bcu.ac.uk

School Reception  
0121 331 7220

Appendix 7 - Attendance Monitoring

During your time with us your attendance in classes will be monitored. You will receive an ID card at the on-campus enrolment session; please keep this with you at all times as you will need it to enter University buildings and you will sometimes be asked to swipe your card to record your attendance at teaching sessions. We want to make sure that you get the best out of your studies and monitoring your attendance will help us to see whether you may need additional support and guidance at times. To reflect the strict attitude of the industry towards lateness and absenteeism, Birmingham School of Acting demands a professional attitude to time-keeping and attendance at all times on the course.

The marking system for all modules takes account of the need to have a professional commitment to the ensemble nature of the activities which make up the modules and recognises that absences for whatever reason will affect the quality of a students’ work and are likely to impact negatively on the work of other students. As all modules are compulsory there are no classes/rehearsals which are optional. Lateness or absence or non-engagement will affect your module marks and you will fail if your attendance is poor.

All students are required to ‘engage’ with the learning taking place in classes and rehearsals. Being passive or a ‘passenger’ in classes or rehearsals can impact negatively on the learning experience of both the group and the individual and as such is not indicative of professional practice. Non-engagement can include: not fully participating in exercises, discussions or presentation of prepared work in a class or rehearsal as and when required. Persistent non-engagement in a class or rehearsals may impact negatively on your work and may lead to a fail mark. All classes and rehearsals are included in the ‘process’ element of all assessments.