A growing appetite for three-year undergraduate evening degrees

From only three courses and 28 students in 2010 to 40 courses and 1,010 students today, Birkbeck’s new degrees are expanding to meet demand

The growth of Birkbeck’s three-year evening degrees continues to be a resounding success.

In 2010, for the first time, Birkbeck offered undergraduate degrees taught in the evenings over three years – the same timescale as a traditional full-time degree. The undergraduate degrees on offer were BA Philosophy, LLB Law and BSc Psychology. Today, 40 courses are offered as three-year degrees, and from September 2014, 50 courses will be offered as three-year degrees.

As with Birkbeck’s traditional four-year, part-time programmes, many students on the three-year courses did not go to university at the age of 18. However, after starting careers or families, they felt it was the right moment for them to get a degree, to help them advance in their careers. Increasing numbers of younger students are also signing up to the three-year courses: this year, 28% of new students were aged 18–20.

Evening study enables students to work throughout their course and build up a bank of experience that will give them the edge when they graduate.

Jonah Duffin, Head of Marketing and Recruitment at Birkbeck, said: “Recruitment to three-year courses is soaring. Students of all ages and backgrounds realise the benefits that our flexible, evening teaching offers and use it to fit study around other commitments and priorities, whether that’s raising a family or securing an internship. I’m pleased that Birkbeck is at the forefront of meeting the demand for more flexible learning, and I feel sure that it’s something that we’re going to see more of across the sector.”

Charity Mapfeka

Charity Mapfeka did not really consider university when she left college. Instead she went straight into work in administrative and secretarial roles.

Having her first baby at the age of 27 made Charity think again about getting a degree. She was working for a legal firm, and when she discussed studying with her boss he was very encouraging, so she decided to go for it.

She chose Birkbeck’s LLB programme, which would enable her to continue working and to get a degree in three years.

Charity said: “I felt that it was now or never – I needed to throw myself into it, so I enrolled on the three-year programme at Birkbeck. It wasn’t an easy ride; during my first year I was suffering severe headaches as a result of complications during the birth of my daughter, and then in my final year I fell pregnant again! The tutors supported and encouraged me throughout. When I had my second baby in April, just before my exams, and had to stay in hospital until mid-May, they arranged for me to sit my exams in September. I don’t think that I could have managed the difficulties of combining work, family and university, if the tutors hadn’t been so accommodating. They really understand that Birkbeck students are often juggling lots of things in their lives.”

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LLB Law

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