

#EnglishCreates



Why Study English at University?

Gail Marshall, Chair of University English, tells you about a new campaign to inform A Level students about the realities of doing an English degree. Spoiler alert – it’s a really good choice, not only because of the interest value but also because of the employment prospects afterwards.

Create a difference in the world through an English degree, and futureproof your skills for life, work, and social change

You might have been hearing recently, in the media or from others around you, that you can’t really do much with an English degree, or indeed any arts and humanities degree. There’s a real need to do some myth-busting about these stories, and to let people know what an English degree can entail these days. People are not necessarily up-to-date with their information, and may not know how much English has changed over the years, how it prepares students for employment afterwards, but also how vibrant and connected with the contemporary world and its needs an English degree – whether literature, language, linguistics, creative writing, or one of the many joint degrees you can do with English – can be.

So, University English, with the help of our colleagues in the English Association, has launched a campaign to tell students and teachers about some of the great things

that you can do with an English degree, what that degree involves, and why it’s such an important subject in the 21st century. Our hashtag is **#EnglishCreates**, because we know that English does indeed create – opportunities, a life-long passion for reading and communicating, and the chance to make a difference. The lead message of our campaign is:

Create a difference in the world through an English degree, and futureproof your skills for life, work, and social change.

Fundamentally, we believe that:

- by studying the literature, language, and creative writing you love, you can gain the futureproof skills you need for life, work and change;
- you can make a difference to the world by embarking on an English degree and letting your creativity change and challenge the way the world works; and
- studying English at university leads to a huge choice of careers, with similar employability rates to those for students who studied STEM degrees.

The Facts about Employment

Here are some facts: average starting salaries are: English, £23,000; Classics,

£25,000; History, £24,000; Philosophy, £25,000; Biological Sciences, £23,500; Business and Management Studies, £25,000; Chemistry, £25,000 (figures from Complete University Guide, 2021). But because these figures are a snapshot of recent graduates, they mislead. English is great for your whole career: the DfE’s figures show English is joint fourth in terms of annual average wage growth, at 6.2%, compared to 5.9% for Physics (at sixth) (British Academy, Qualified for the Future, 2020). Humanities graduates comprise 55% of global leaders and 58% of FTSE company executives. English graduates go into an incredibly broad range of jobs, and are a key contributor to the creative industries, the fastest growing part of the UK economy: 25% of arts, humanities, and social science graduates work in the creative sector, which is currently worth £84.1bn to the UK. By 2030, it is expected that there will be 900,000 new jobs in this sector. (British Academy report, Qualified for the Future, 2020).

What Does An English Degree Equip You to Do?

English graduates do well in the jobs market because an English degree equips



you with four really fundamental skills that are valued by employers in all sectors:

- **Communication,**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Collaboration**
- **Creativity.**

The way we teach is in small groups and workshops that enable you to share and experiment with ideas and in lectures that give you information, but that also model how arguments are constructed. This means that you will build those foundational skills as you learn about the literature that you love, or begin to write literature for yourselves, or analyse how language works in the world.

Application to the Real World

English degrees these days are also really concerned with real-world applications. English Language and Linguistics in particular are degrees that will be increasingly important in helping you to negotiate the challenges and opportunities of AI. The ways you're examined on an English degree may be through blogs, broadcasts, reports on placements, as well as more traditional essays and dissertations. You'll be able to read texts that look, for instance, at climate change's impact on the environment and think about how the way in which we speak about nature has changed over the centuries; you can

study how the language of climate change is used; or you can write your own eco-literature. And English in all its forms has been a leading discipline in decolonising the curriculum.

Finally, and really importantly, we believe that English degrees are some of the most enjoyable degrees that you can take, and that enjoyment should be a fundamental part of what you study at university. You're more likely to think and work harder, and to do better, if you're doing something you enjoy. We're going to be spending this year letting as many people as possible know how exciting English is, culminating in a week of English events in summer 2024 at universities around the UK, and online. We really hope you and your teachers can celebrate English with us.

■ Gail Marshall is the Chair of University English.

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