Active contributors to the community

19000

Reading graduates currently living in RG postcodes

With a constant student population of around 17,000, 7,000 of whom graduate every year and over 180,000 alumni since its foundation, the University of Reading is a key source of human capital in the region.

Our students, the majority of whom live on the main Whiteknights campus or in the communities local to the main campus, are an integral part of Greater Reading.

They spend an average of £6,496 a year off campus in the local area and spend an average of £3,475 a year on housing. Many of them make positive contributions to the communities they live in through volunteering in local schools, running Brownie groups, working in community gardens or running charity appeals.

Once they graduate, a fifth of our alumni stay on in the area, bringing new skills to the regional economy and often playing leading roles in business, the public sector or charities.

19,000 Reading graduates currently live in RG postcodes with another 3,000 in Slough, 3,000 in Oxford and 4,000 in Surrey.
Jo Mills

Kraft Foods, Assistant Brand Manager, Dairylea

Originally from Leicestershire, Jo Mills chose the University of Reading as the best launch pad for a career in the food industry in 2005. Reading-based PepsiCo offered Jo an internship, which ultimately led to a permanent job with the company when she graduated with a First in Food Marketing and Business Economics in 2008. The majority of her course cohort also went into the food industry.

Last year, Jo joined Thames Valley based Kraft as Assistant Brand Manager, Dairylea where she is responsible for market planning and brand performance for the UK market. Looking back at her time at Reading, Jo says: ‘The course at Reading provided an excellent foundation for my future career. Combined with work experience opportunities, an excellent campus experience, the benefits of living in Reading and the lovely surrounding countryside, as well as easy access to London, made Reading the right choice for me.’

Nicola Akhurst

Speech and Language Therapist, Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Nicola graduated from Reading’s BSc Speech and Language Therapy degree programme in 2010. She had relocated to Reading to retrain and has stayed living in Reading and working in the region.

‘I chose Reading for personal reasons and because the course has a good reputation – 600 of us applied for the 25 NHS-funded places when I started as a mature student at Reading.’

The training and subsequent working life of a speech and language therapist is a challenging one. Nicola is specialising in treating adults with neurological impairments: ‘People might be surprised just how common speech and language impairments are in adults. Some brain injuries and neurological conditions can, for example, affect your ability to understand language, to find words and put fully formed sentences together and may also impact on the muscles needed for speech. Imagine what it would be like not to be able to communicate your feelings or basic needs to someone – that’s where our work comes in.’

Alumni with local connections

Robert Gillmor, ornithologist, wildlife artist, author and illustrator
Rob Wilson, Conservative MP for East Reading
Beth Morgan, England Cricketer

Mark Adams, responsible for launching MS Dos (Microsoft) in UK & Europe and now a successful investor and partner in a business consultancy firm
James Hygate, CEO of Green Fuels, whose company has appeared on Top Gear and fuel HRH vintage Aston Martin

GB Rowers Ric Egington, Natasha Page, Bill Lucas, Sam Townsend, Debbie Flood, Charles Cousins
Pippa Greenwood, gardening expert
Lady Eve Balfour, farmer, educator, organic farming pioneer, and a founding figure in the organic movement
Students

The University has 16,724 students, 14,000 of whom study on our campuses in Reading and Henley, making a financial and societal contribution to the area.

Reading University Students’ Union (RUSU) organises a wide range of volunteering activity for Reading students and recognises the efforts of students through a volunteer of the month scheme. Emily Shaw, Societies and Volunteering Co-ordinator at RUSU, highlights some of the work undertaken. ‘RUSU is working hard to support and grow a culture of volunteering among Reading students. Many of our students give up their time to make a positive contribution in the local community in initiatives such as running a community choir, building an eco-friendly greenhouse for Little Learners’ Nursery and becoming pen pals with residents at Lakeside Care Home.’

Ridgeline Trust garden project

Among the latest winners of the University’s Student Community Awards are students involved with the Ridgeline Trust. Students volunteer at the Trust’s Therapeutic Garden in Whiteknights Road, Reading, which benefits mentally and physically disabled members of the community. ‘The input of all three students has been appreciated and enjoyed by the team,’ said Gill Grainger, from the Ridgeline Trust.

The Student Community Awards recognise the efforts of the many Reading students who help others using their own initiative, perhaps by providing support to others, making a contribution to the local community or showing acts of kindness or good neighbourliness.

Law students pro bono

Almost 50% of undergraduates in Reading’s School of Law are involved in local pro bono work, professional work which lawyers undertake without payment. Students gain experience through the programmes while the local community benefits from free legal help and skills development. The School encourages and helps facilitate one of the most comprehensive pro bono activities programmes of any law school in England and Wales, including:

- Citizens Advice Bureau Training after which students go on to work as advisors at the Reading, Wokingham or other local Citizens Advice Bureaux.
- The Streetlaw project which involves students visiting local schools and Reading Prison to raise legal awareness by bringing aspects of law and the legal system into the community.
- CommuniCare, a scheme offering free legal advice for people who have problems relating to employment and housing.

Global reach, local impact

Student volunteers at the Ridgeline Trust