



# University of Bath Case Study

A standards solution for the academic world

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# A standards solution for the academic world

## About the university

The University of Bath, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, is a public university located in Bath, Somerset, UK. It teaches over 15,000 students a year and is ranked amongst the top 15 universities in the UK.<sup>1</sup>

The University of Bath is involved in the cutting-edge research that solves world problems such as the first ever yeast-derived alternative to palm oil on an industrial scale and next-generation lithium batteries and energy storage for electric cars. In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework, 32% of Bath's submitted research activity achieved the highest possible classification of 4\*, defined as world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.<sup>2</sup>

The university has grown rapidly, particularly in the last few years. As of 2016, 15,570 students were studying at the university; of whom 11,315 were undergraduates (full-time and part-time) and 4,255 were postgraduates.

According to The Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey 2015<sup>3</sup> The University of Bath is the best university in the UK for student experience. The university is ranked second overall in the student satisfaction criteria and third for graduate prospects (the percentage of graduates in professional jobs or postgraduate study six months after leaving university).



David Stacey, Faculty Librarian for Engineering & Design

David Stacey shared some insight on the needs for standards and the tools the university put in place to accommodate these needs.

We, as an institution, are very much focused on STEM subjects – says David – there is quite a lot of interest and a lot of our students get exposed to industry, particularly through placements, then come back with even more interest in standards and demand for those.

Being up to date with standards is imperative to the university as its major academic strengths historically have been engineering, physical sciences, mathematics and technology.

To satisfy this demand on an individual basis would be costly and time-consuming, therefore the university chose BSOL – Standards Online – an online catalogue which contains over 95,000 internationally recognised standards.

It's a very easy to use platform – adds David - and we are invested in subscribing to this resource annually. Obviously if you look at the cost it would be to provide those individual standards, we've made a huge saving over the years.

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## University of Bath in numbers:



15,570 students in 2016:  
11,315 Undergrads and 4,255 Postgrads



Research grants and contracts portfolio is worth around £123 million



4 faculties and 18 departments



87% of the research was defined as world-leading or internationally excellent<sup>4</sup>

1. <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings>

2. <http://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/research-excellence-framework-ref-2014>

3. <http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/rankings/index.html>

4. <http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/organisation/facts-figures/index.html>

## Do you have any difficulties with the platform?

I don't think we ever had any difficulties with platform itself. I think it's gone through various iterations over the years and it's actually very intuitive and most people I've trained or shown the platform find very quickly find what they are after.

So 99% of the time it's all accessible without any difficulty by our staff or students.

## What was your main reason(s) for subscribing to BSOL?

BSOL gives the institution and the library great economies of scale in terms of high volume usage of important BS and BS/ISO documents which would otherwise have to be satisfied with comparatively expensive individual purchase and involve a fair bit more admin to achieve.

Staff and students across the whole university can access the full text at point of need. It's available 24/7 and it is easy to get access the content needed via keyword, standard number, searching or browsing by classification.

We have been subscribing for several years, certainly before I took up my current role in the Library's engineering and design faculty team.

It's definitely a key resource. The usage statistics provided by BSI demonstrate for us that it is consistently high.

“ Get in contact with British Standards, set up a trial, have a look at the product itself... take it from there really! ”

## Advice to other institutions?

When making a decision, focus on the quality of the actual product you get in terms of content, in terms of accessibility, in terms of the platform itself and how easy it is to use. I would also add that the support and training that we get from all of the British Standards team has been excellent. We have had visiting trainers from BSI and support with promotional materials to further raise awareness of the resource.

What I would say to other librarians and other institutions is to get in contact with British Standards, set up a trial, have a look at the product itself, maybe get some other academics involved and... take it from there really!

You can get a good gauge of value for money based on the usage statistics, which also give an insight into the types of standards in demand and for which disciplines.

You may also be surprised to find that staff from various professional services at your institution will also require access to standards and make good use of these – not just academics and researchers.

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**BSOL**  
Standards Online



British Standards Online (BSOL) is the online standards database that makes using standards easier and more cost effective. You can access a comprehensive library of over 95,000 internationally recognized standards.

**BSOL subscription of The University of Bath includes:**

- ✓ 53 modules
- ✓ 29,860 standards in their collection

## University of Bath and standards:

- ✓ 25,238 standards were downloaded in 2016
- ✓ £1,932,277 value of these downloads in 2016

## Top 5 downloads in 2016:

BS EN 1992-1-1	Design of concrete structures.
BS EN 1993-1-8	Design of steel structures.
BS EN 1990	Basis of structural design
BS EN 1995-1-1	Design of timber structures.
BS 1377-8	Test for soils for civil engineering.



# More insights on the use of standards from faculty and research



Bhavna Sharma, lecturer in architecture and civil engineering

Bhavna Sharma shared her best practices of using standards for teaching and research:

I typically refer to standards in teaching, use them as an example for looking for innovative structural materials as well as ways to access projects in terms of sustainability. The number of standards can vary depending on the subject area. I typically use a lot of timber standards when I talk about natural materials for construction.

I try to reference all the relevant standards as a way to show students the impact of globalisation in a field of engineering and design. I reference ASTM, ISO as well as British and European standards.

## How would you advise other universities to use standards?

I've always found standards very useful in every institution I've been at in terms of research and teaching. I commonly use them in my research areas and have more recently started to include them in terms of teaching. I think that the subscription is quite useful.

I think in general standards are quite useful especially in research to ensure communality between different projects going on worldwide. In terms of access to standards it can be quite helpful when teaching and when investigating specific topics to provide references to students as well as post-graduate researchers.





**Cristiano Figueiredo,**  
PHD student

Cristiano Figueiredo revealed some practical tips on the use of standards in his research:

My PHD is based on the use of natural hydraulic lime for conservation of all buildings, monuments, and historic heritage. The use of materials is the subject of standards; therefore all my tests and characterisations of materials are based on international and European standards.

### How do you find standards for your research?

Usually I use the online portal - BSOL - this is where I use standards. There I can find and reference the historic versions that the standard had.

Actually during my PHD one of the standards changed to a newer version, so it was interesting to see if anything relevant was changed or it was just a matter of adjusting the information. It was standard BS EN 459-1.

I tracked the changes to the previous versions of this standard and many of them were relevant for my work.

### Do standards help you with your future?

One of my aims of my work is to influence and to give some advice to newly revised standards. For example, BS EN 459 is relevant for production of materials but not that relevant for the use of materials in the conservation industry. In my work I encourage to use standards. I believe standards help build trust and take the risk down.

“In my work I encourage to use standards. I believe standards help build trust and take the risk down.”

## Get BSI support for your research project

Research plays an important role in standards-making. By exploring new concepts and testing innovative ideas, it makes a positive contribution to the work of our standards committees.

This is why every year BSI supports a limited number of research projects on topics relevant to standards and standardization.

We do this through members of our standards development team. They act as external mentors, providing postgraduate researchers with support at every stage of their project - from proposal right through to publication.

For more information or to discuss an idea for a research project email [research@bsigroup.com](mailto:research@bsigroup.com)



If you would like to find out more about  
standards please get in touch:

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