

Gemma Alcock, Design graduate and  
Founder of SkyBound Rescuer

## My degree of *difference*

Using drones to bring  
search and rescue into  
the 21st century

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### **Gemma Alcock, founder of Skybound Rescuer, BU design graduate**

**Before I started my final year at BU, I wanted to do something a bit different, so I signed up to become a beach lifeguard in Poole. I had no idea what an impact it would have on my career development.**

While I was manning a lifeguard hut on Sandbanks beach, a lady sadly tried to take her own life. A non-swimmer, she walked into the sea in a spot where she knew she couldn't be seen. We were alerted by members of the public, and I reached her in time to keep her afloat while the jet ski arrived, and thankfully, we managed to save her life.

The incident got me thinking however – we had no idea of the drama unfolding just a few

hundred metres away from us. It made me realise how hard it is for lifeguards – or lifeboat rescue crews – to spot people in the water.

As a result, I designed a drone for my final year project that would help RNLI lifeboat crew search for people in the water. Helicopters are a crew's best chance of finding someone, but they are expensive and slow to respond, and used as a last resort when they need to be the first choice.

Since graduating, I've founded my own company, SkyBound Rescuer, which specialises in training and campaigning for the use of drones for public safety. It's my hope to play my part in helping drones become part of the way to help keep the public safe – and provide them with help when things go wrong.