

University Foundation Year

Notes for Admissions Tutors and Education Advisors

Introduction

The Foundation Year aims to provide an academic progression route into British higher education for overseas students hoping to study at undergraduate level. Its purpose is to ensure these young people have the factual knowledge, intellectual maturity, study habits, language skills and self-confidence that will make them successful students at a British university.

Delivery of the course follows the college's well-established practice in teaching A-levels: small tutorial groups and close individual attention within a highly supportive, international sixth form college environment.

Students must be 17 years of age when the course starts and must have a level of English equivalent to at least IELTS 5.5 for admission to the course. The course runs over two semesters, either from September to June or from January to August.

Course content

The syllabus is designed to provide a culturally-adapted knowledge- and skills base appropriate to undergraduate work in three broad areas:

1. Humanities, Social Sciences and Business-related disciplines;
2. Scientific, Mathematical and Engineering-related disciplines.
3. Architecture- and Design-related disciplines

Students take five main subjects, depending on their chosen degree discipline. Learning outcomes for these are summarised overleaf.

Compulsory subjects are Data Handling with Information Technology and Communications & Study Skills.

Three elective subjects are chosen from Economics, Human Geography, Government & Law, Mathematics, Physics and Art & Design (Fine Art).

One subsidiary subject is chosen from European Thought and 20th Century History.

The course provides on average 680 hours of tuition divided equally between the main subjects which are taught in small tutorial groups. Subsidiary subjects are taught by lecture over approximately 20 hours.

Students are required to complete the course with not less than 90% attendance. They are expected to sit the IELTS test before the end of the course.

Assessment, equivalence and award

Assessment is continuous, formative and externally-moderated. The final award is based equally on marks gained for coursework assignments and examinations in each subject over both semesters.

A weighting system ensures that later work receives proportionally more credit so a student is not unduly penalised if he or she makes a slow start to the course.

Marking is primarily against GCE A-level benchmarks with the following broad equivalents in academic standard based on overall marks across all subjects:

40% (Pass) 160 points at A-level (DDD)

50% 240 points at A-level (CCC)

60% (Merit) 300 points at A-level (BBB)

A Distinction may be awarded to candidates who are of grade A ability and have an overall mark of at least 70%.

In their offers therefore admissions tutors may choose to specify:

- an overall grade or percentage mark for the whole course
- grades or percentages in individual subjects for the whole course
- grades or percentages for the final semester

A Diploma is awarded to successful candidates and information about their performance is given in a full transcript of marks earned which is sent to receiving institutions.

Quality assurance

The course is overseen by an independent Advisory Board of higher education and sixth form specialists who meet three times a year to scrutinise and moderate the setting and marking of all exams and coursework assignments. A second-marking process is in place to achieve standardisation and anomalies are referred to the Advisory Board. The final award is approved by the Board which may also take account of mitigating circumstances.

The college is accredited and the Foundation Year course formally inspected by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further & Higher Education (BAC) and by the British Council.

Learning outcomes

The course aims to ensure that students leave with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to get the maximum benefit from their chosen undergraduate courses. On successful completion of the course therefore, a student should:

General Academic and Study skills

- be able to read critically about the real world and apply theoretical knowledge and constructs to dynamic real-world situations
- be able to espouse a particular view while analysing alternatives objectively and acknowledging all sides of an argument
- be able to focus on the main features in a lecture or seminar and take concise, relevant notes
- be able to gather information for an assignment from a range of written and verbal sources, making full use of library and ICT resources
- be able to extract and interpret information from graphical sources
- be able to construct coherent written arguments and oral presentations using language appropriate to the subject and to the style of presentation
- be able to support these by appropriate use of tables, maps, charts and diagrams, making good use of the possibilities offered by word processing and spreadsheet software.

Data Handling & Information Technology

- be able to structure, store and analyse numerical and non-numerical data making sophisticated use of generic computer packages such as MS Excel and Access
- be able to make sophisticated use of document-handling software such as Word to present text and data together with clarity
- be able to represent data using a variety of graphical forms
- be able to analyse numerical data using standard statistical methods
- appreciate the application of statistics to modelling real-world situations
- understand notions of statistical testing

Human Geography

- be aware of the main elements in the global distribution of people, industries and wealth and understand how social, economic, historical and environmental factors interact to influence these
- be able to explain the processes involved in the development of a country's industry, transport, population structure and economy
- have in-depth knowledge of the local effects of global processes, the impacts of government policy and the extent to which nations are interdependent
- appreciate the role of models in the study of human geography and be able to apply abstract theories to real life case studies

Economics

- have factual knowledge of economics at micro-, macro-, international levels
- understand the tools of economic analysis and the problems to which these tools may be applied
- understand economics as a discipline in its own right and be aware of its links to related subjects
- be familiar with common sources of economics data and accustomed to using the principal reference sources

Politics, Government & Law

- understand the relationships between ideas, institutions and issues in political systems
- have a knowledge of different systems of governance around the world
- be familiar with the framework of the British political system and its institutions and be able to empathise with the main political viewpoints;
- have a sound understanding of the nature of law and its role in society;
- have a sound understanding of the sources of national and international law;

Mathematics

- be confident and proficient in all standard algebraic, numerical and mathematical techniques;
- have covered a full range of topics in pure mathematics and be able to build on the methods and techniques treated;
- have covered a full range of topics in applied mathematics which will support the study of Physics at this level;
- be able to express verbally ideas which are represented symbolically;

Physics

- be familiar with the principles of mechanics, electrical theory, thermal physics and wave motion;
- be able to devise experiments to test physical laws derived from these principles;
- have a sound grasp of algebra and basic calculus as used in the development of physical theories;
- understand the relationship between theory and experiment and the role of mathematics in this relationship;
- understand the effects of experimental errors on the outcome of an experiment;

Art & Design (Fine Art)

- be able to communicate ideas in visual form;
- be able to paint and draw in various media for different purposes;
- recognise and be able to use the expressive potential of different materials and processes;
- be able to make connections between their own work and that of other artists and designers, past and present, from their own and other cultures;
- be able to use effectively the resources of museums and galleries and draw on these for ideas and inspiration;
- be able to articulate a personal view of the subject.