

# Foundation to success

Academic preparation programmes are rising in popularity as students and agents realise the value of a programme that aids orientation into a new study environment and culture. We profile a range of courses on offer in the UK.

Having the correct IELTS score for entry does not necessarily mean that the student is well prepared for degree study," says Claire Bradshaw at London Metropolitan University in the UK, underlining why international students should consider undertaking a specific academic preparation course. In order to ensure that a student is assimilated into the UK education environment, an academic preparation course, or foundation programme, provides targeted tuition as well as language skills tuition and, very often, IELTS training.

There is a variety of such courses available, ranging from pre-sessional courses, offered in the summer prior to the start of the academic year, to academic year programmes that run for an entire academic year and can result in a confirmed place at a university.

Margaret Andrew at Harven School of English in Woking explains that in their school's case, "Our foundation course is all year – three terms – but students of a high enough level can join for the second and third term in January. Completion of this course guarantees a university place."

Some students opt to study at a university or alternative higher education institution prior to their undergraduate degree, while others may look for private language schools that can offer entry links to a variety of universities. Even those schools that cannot offer a guaranteed place will offer university access via a central placement service. Carmel Engin of Lake School of English in Oxford says, "We are looking to help students find the course that suits them best – rather than us!"

The typical content of programmes in this field covers study skills, targeted English language acquisition and intercultural orientation. At London Metropolitan University, Bradshaw says, "Students learn about the importance of independent learning and get experience in different assessment [models] such as reports and group presentations." Sarah Beasley at Beet Language Centre in Bournemouth adds, "By the end of their course, students will be fully prepared and totally confident in their ability to follow a university degree course."

Lucy Wilkins at Bell International says that they have offered a university foundation programme for four years now. "There has been a noticeable increase in students wishing to study at Bell as part of a structured path into a UK university," she says, explaining that the course has evolved by introducing closer links with universities. "We are constantly working on establishing strong ties with universities themselves," says Wilkins, "allowing universities to give talks to the students and also organising regular visits to campuses."

At Anglolang Academy of English in Scarborough, another new development has come in the form of recognition for its university foundation programme from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Sarah Wall at the school explains that the programme is now "a recognised, alternative route to A-levels".

At universities, courses are also reviewed regularly to ensure the content is as appropriate as possible. At City University in London, which offers two-week pre-sessional courses in the summer, Tim Connell explains, "Our weekly timetable has got longer; we have added grammar [lessons], by popular request; and we have added specimen lectures given by the departments."

This is a product area that seems likely to carry on evolving. Bradshaw notes, "Good feedback has shown us that students benefit from the experiential nature of the assessments and activities that we do with them. They feel more prepared than other students [from overseas]."



## Selection of programmes available

Location	Name of institution	Min length (wks)	Start date(s)	Direct entry links	Location	Name of institution	Min length (wks)	Start date(s)	Direct entry links
Bournemouth	Beet Language Centre	6	year round	yes	London	Hampstead School of English	1	year round	no
Bournemouth	Bournemouth & Poole College	38	Sep	yes	London	Language Studies International	12	Jan/April/July/Sep	yes
Bournemouth	BBSI	12	year round	no	London	London Metropolitan University	4	year round	yes
Bournemouth	ETC International College	36	Sep	yes	London	University of the Arts London	4	year round	yes
Bournemouth	MLS International College	12	year round	yes	Manchester	Berlitz Manchester	12	year round	no
Brighton	Regency College	24	Sep/Jan/May	no	Manchester	University of Manchester	4	year round	yes
Cambridge	Bell International	36	Sep	no	nr London	Shane Global	4/24/36	July/Jan/Sep	yes
Edinburgh	Heriot-Watt University	4/10	July/Oct	yes	Norwich	NILE	4	year round	yes
Edinburgh	Stevenson College	36	August	yes	Oxford	The Lake School of English	10	year round	no
Canterbury	Concorde International	12	Sep/Jan/March	yes	Scarborough	Anglolang Academy of English	33	Jan/Sep	yes
Chelmsford	Anglia Polytechnic University	23	Sep/Feb	yes	Scarborough	Scarborough Int. School of Eng.	12	year round	yes
Chester	English in Chester	24/36	Jan/Sep	yes	Sheffield	Carl Duisberg Centren	13	Sep/Jan/May	no
Leeds	University of Leeds	6/12	August/term-led	yes	various	Aspect	30/46	year round/Aug	yes
London	Burlington School	12	year round	yes	various	St Giles Colleges	24	Sep/Jan/April	no
London	City University	2	summer	yes	various	Regent Language Training	24/34	Oct/Jan	yes
London	ELS Language Centres	24	Sep/Dec	yes	Woking	Harven School of English	11/24	Sep/Jan/April	yes
London	Frances King School of English	26	Sep/Jan	yes	Worcester	University College Worcester	4/40	summer/Sep-Jan	yes
London	Global International College	20	Oct/Feb	yes	York	York College	40	Sep	yes

If more than one type of programme available, the minimum lengths of stay correspond to the respective start dates given. Information should be checked with each school.