

Academic life in the UK

Studying in the UK, how does it differ from home?

When studying at a UK University as an international student, it may seem very different to studying at home.

Your timetable and the different scheduled hours will vary from subject to subject depending on the method of delivery for your modules.

Depending on what you are studying, what level you are studying at and where you are

studying you may be faced with having to do things differently than what you are used to.

For example, you may be responsible for managing your own research and time, instead of being prescribed set work. You may have coursework to complete in your own time, or you may have a number of exams to test your understanding.



Lectures

Lectures are for large groups of students, which could be everyone in the same year or everyone studying the same module on a course. A lecturer will probably stand at the front of the room and provide information about a particular part of the course.



What is Block Teaching?

This refers to a 'block' of time – for example, a number of weeks – being devoted to a particular topic or prescribed set of learning objectives/outcomes.



Blended learning

This definition includes different delivery methods (face-to-face or computer mediated), different scheduling (synchronous or asynchronous) and different levels of guidance (individual, lectures or group learning).



Problem based learning

A process designed to experientially engage learners in processes of inquiry into complex problems of significance and relevance to their lives and learning.

It is intended to challenge learners to pursue authentic questions, wonders, and uncertainties in a focused way, which enables them to construct, deepen, and extend their knowledge and understanding. Thoughtful presentation of the problem is critical to this approach. Problems must be complex enough that there is a need to seek many perspectives on the issues, to engage in collaborative inquiry, and to generate multiple possible solutions.

Portfolio Assessment

Assessment based on the systematic collection of learner work (such as written assignments, drafts, artwork, and presentations) that represents competencies, exemplary work, or the learner's developmental progress.

In addition to examples of their work, most portfolios include reflective statements prepared by learners. Portfolios are assessed for evidence of learner achievement with respect to established learning outcomes and standards.



Academic culture

It may take some time for you to adjust to studying in the UK. Academic culture and expectations vary according to the subject, the level of study and the type of institution. However, there are some general trends that you may notice in the UK:

Students often work independently, studying on their own for significant periods of time.

Students are expected to develop critical judgement, which means an ability to assess whether an argument is coherent and well supported by evidence.

Learning large amounts of factual data is important in some subject areas, but in many cases a critical approach is considered more important.

Many UK students will also be going through the process of learning the conventions of academic life. Study skills classes may help you understand what is required. Your tutors should also be able to guide you as to how to approach your work.



Know what is required

It is important to know what you need to do to fulfil the course requirements. By finding out the answers to some of the following questions, you may be able to plan your work and how to use your time effectively:

When writing an essay or assignment, how long should it be?

Is a piece of work assessed, or is it for "practice"?

What proportion of your mark does a piece of work or examination represent?

How much work will you have to do, and at what stage in the course?

Much of this information may be included in a course handbook: this will be a useful reference throughout the course.



Lecture notes

When you attend lectures, whether online or in person you will need to take notes.

Remember you don't need to write down everything the lecturer says:



concentrate on the main points and important details most lecturers use asides (stories to illustrate a point), examples and even jokes. You don't need to write all of these down.

Abbreviations and symbols for common words and terms can help you write faster, but use ones that you will understand later if there is something you don't understand, make a note to ask after the lecture or in a tutorial. Keep your notes in order in a file. Most students

"write up" their notes neatly after a lecture. Don't just file the notes away until your exams. Read through them regularly: this will help with revision.

if you want to record a lecture on tape, ask the lecturer's permission first.

Don't worry if you find it difficult to understand the lecturer. This will get easier as you get used to their style and, if you are not a native speaker, as your English improves.

Seminars

Seminars can be intimidating if you are not used to this kind of teaching. Don't worry, many other students feel the same at first.

Participating actively in seminars is an important part of the learning process, so try to contribute, even if it seems difficult at first. It is best to do some reading before each seminar, so that you are familiar with the topic and can follow and contribute to the discussion. It may help you to make notes before the seminar of any points you would like to make. If you are having difficulty in seminars, discuss this with your tutor.

Course work

These are written assignments, which could be a report or an essay about a particular topic.

You'll be given a deadline for it to be submitted by but as much time as you want on them.



Plagiarism warning

This term can vary widely from country to country. Plagiarism means taking someone else's ideas or work and presenting it as your own, without acknowledging the original source.

This may not be intentional; sometimes it may simply be because you have not referenced your work correctly.

Plagiarism is taken very seriously in the UK: if you are found to be plagiarising, you could fail the exam or assignment, or even be asked to leave your course. If you don't fully understand what it is - find out! Check in your course handbook and on your institution's website. Or ask your personal tutor.

There may also be academic support classes at your institution which can help you learn how to reference correctly.



Our Virtual Learning Platform. Moodle is where all lecture/module can also be found. Recordings of lectures can also be found in Moodle.



Microsoft Teams is the platform used for your face to face lectures. You will be sent links by your tutor to join in the Teams lectures.