

Foundation Years

A Foundation Year is designed for students who have the ability to study for a degree but don't have the required qualifications to enter directly onto an honours degree.

It therefore attracts many students from non-traditional educational backgrounds and under-represented groups.

Once you have passed the Foundation Year you can apply to progress onto Year 1 of appropriate linked honours undergraduate degree.

A number of universities now offer these additional years to students in order to allow them to overcome barriers, potentially change direction or to take the additional time they need to reach the required standards.

If you would like to do further research on the available foundation years then use this link <https://digital.ucas.com/search>

Pros

- Allows students access to higher tariff universities
- Allows students to change their academic pathway e.g. science based to humanities
- Allows students time to improve their study skills/ make transition to uni
- Allows students who have had significant barriers to education an opportunity to progress
- The content of a Foundation Year may be quite broad, e.g. Social Sciences rather than Sociology; this allows the student to explore alternatives before committing to a degree programme.

Cons

- Extra year of fees and maintenance costs – students should consider a 3rd year of free level 3 education or some other route if this cost is prohibitive.
- Foundation years are not available at all universities or for all subject areas so the student will be more limited in their choices.
- An extra year of study is involved, unless the student needs to do a 3rd year in FE anyway.
- If the students do not manage to complete the Foundation Year successfully then they will have incurred debt but not achieved any qualifications

Alternatives

- 3rd year free education – gain extra qualifications
- Reapply with achieved grades – some universities may allow a grade slip
- Resits – new system may mean that they will have to take the second grade - a risk if it is lower
- Foundation degree – opportunity to top this up to a full undergraduate degree but not offered everywhere. (A foundation year is different to a foundation degree, a foundation degree is 2 years long, can be funded through student finance but is a more vocational qualification, for more information see <http://fd.ucas.com/FoundationDegree/About.aspx>)
- Access courses – costs involved if you already hold a level 3 qualification, this is usually only available to students over the age of 19 but it is worth checking with local providers to see if they are able to offer any flexibility.
- Mature students – may be allowed in with lower grades if they have relevant experience.
- Degree apprenticeships
- Open University <http://www.open.ac.uk/>