Programme Specification: Foundation Year Life Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Course record information

Name and level of final award	• Bachelor of Science with Honours - Biochemistry • Bachelor of Science with Honours - Biomedical Sciences • Bachelor of Science with Honours - Biological Sciences • Bachelor of Science with Honours - Human Nutrition • Bachelor of Science with Honours - Pharmacology and Physiology The award is Bologna FQ-EHEA first cycle degree or diploma compatible
Name and level of intermediate awards	• Foundation Certificate (Fdn Cert) - Life Sciences
Awarding body/institution	University of Westminster
Teaching institution	University of Westminster
Status of awarding body/institution	Recognised Body
Location of delivery	Primary: Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
QAA subject benchmarking group(s)	https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-biosciences#
Professional statutory or regulatory body	None for the Foundation year. See below for further details on the Honours degree accreditation per award.
Westminster course title, mode of attendance and standard length	• BSc Biological Sciences FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length • BSc Biomedical Sciences FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length • BSc Human Nutrition FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length • BSc Pharmacology and Physiology FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length • BSc Biochemistry FT, Full-time, September start - 4 years standard length
Valid for cohorts	From 2025/6

Additional Course Information

One year full time study commencing in September (level 3), progressing to level 4 upon successful completion of the first year. Applicants and students should refer to the standard degree programme specification for information on levels 4-6 degree structures.

Admissions requirements

There are standard minimum entry requirements for all undergraduate courses. Students are advised to check the standard requirements for the most up-to-date information. For most courses a decision will be made on the basis of your application form alone. However, for some courses the selection process may include an interview to demonstrate your strengths in addition to any formal entry requirements. More information can be found here: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/how-to-apply

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants with prior certificated or experiential learning at the same level of the qualification for which they wish to apply are advised to visit the following page for further information:

https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/guides-and-policies/student-matters/recognition-of-prior-learning

Aims of the programme

The same Foundation Year programme provides an academic base for students intending to follow a range of different bioscience pathways, including Biochemistry, Biological Sciences, Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacology & Physiology. The course aims to create students who, through their knowledge, academic achievements and practical skills are able to benefit fully from study of the biological and medical sciences to degree-level. The programme has been designed to ensure that on successful completion, students acquire the level of scientific knowledge and skills necessary to meet the entry requirements of their chosen undergraduate degree pathway.

This Foundation course will produce level 3 students who:

1. are well informed on and have a secure comprehension of appropriate aspects of natural science;
2. are proactive and confident independent learners;
3. have the ability to integrate information from discrete but related scientific and professional disciplines;
4. possess practical and career-related skills;
5. have a clear view of future study and career opportunities open to them after graduation from the four year degree;
6. are assimilated into the discipline and practices of higher education.

Sustainability

Sustainability has a wide range of meanings and interpretations; in the University of Westminster this is presented as the sustainability of communities working together toward better futures in each School's specialist area.

In the School of Life Sciences our focus is via the development of science-based solutions to known problems, and by exploration of processes or situations to search for improvements that may not have previously been considered.

The Cavendish Living Lab explores the environmental impact of science initiatives across a range of contexts from individual and community health and wellbeing, through urban food growing, to fast-fashion and ideas around consumption-management. Students of the Foundation in Life Science are encouraged to become involved in the Cavendish Living Lab projects. In these projects they are offered authentic learning experiences in building communities of peers exploring goals of social cohesion leading to sustainable development of health interventions for individuals, groups, and communities, developing responses around provision and production of food in urban settings, and exploring approaches to address bioplastics and the impact of fast fashion.

Foundation Students are also encouraged to be part of the Student Wellbeing Project. In this project learners will explore and develop their own approaches to personal sustainability while enhancing their understanding of resilience and wellbeing. As part of the curriculum, participants will complete the Student Resilience Quotient Inventory (sRQi), a comprehensive psychometric tool that assesses resilience across a range of factors. This tool provides valuable insights into managing stress and overcoming adversity. Additionally, by participating, students will contribute to ongoing, real-world research conducted by the Centre for Resilience, fostering a deeper connection to impactful studies on student wellbeing.

During timetabled classes students of the Foundation in Life Sciences explore ecology, and the impact that changes in ecological networks can have on the wider environment. And during practicals they will explore the effects of exercise on physical performance. In all, our students will explore sustainability from a world perspective, a community perspective, and a personal perspective. In this way we prepare them to become fully rounded scientists of the future.

Employment and further study opportunities

University of Westminster graduates will be able to demonstrate the following five Graduate Attributes:

- Critical and creative thinkers
- Literate and effective communicator
- Entrepreneurial
- Global in outlook and engaged in communities
- Social, ethically and environmentally aware

University of Westminster courses capitalise on the benefits that London as a global city and as a major creative, intellectual and technology hub has to offer for the learning environment and experience of our students.

Successful Foundation students progress to BSc (Hons) Biochemistry; BSc (Hons) Biological Sciences; BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences; or BSc (Hons) Pharmacology and Physiology programmes within the University of Westminster and thus gain valuable degrees in their chosen areas of interest. Recent results show that students who do well on the Foundation course invariably graduate with higher classification degrees in their chosen subject than those who enter at level 4. Inclusion within the curriculum of activities which support the development of 'Graduate Attributes' is an acknowledgement that future long-term career success is dependent upon a number of generic factors which support discipline specific knowledge in creating effective professional practitioners.

What will you be expected to achieve?

Learning outcomes are statements on what successful students have achieved as the result of learning. These are threshold statements of achievement the learning outcomes broadly fall into four categories:

- The overall knowledge and understanding you will gain from your course (KU)
- Graduate attributes are characteristics that you will have developed during the duration of your course (GA)
- Professional and personal practice learning outcomes are specific skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course (PPP)
- Key transferable skills that you will be expected to have gained on successful completion of the course. (KTS)

Level 3 course learning outcomes: upon completion of Level 3 you will be able to:

- CL03.1 Identify and use a variety of information sources with due regard for validity (KTS); (KTS)
- CL03.2 State fundamental facts, major concepts and theories in biology relating these to associated biological systems (KU)
- CL03.3 State and explain fundamental facts, major concepts and theories associated with chemistry (KU)
- CL03.4 Provide evidence of a knowledge of the scientific method and experimental process (KU)
- CL03.5 Discuss the ethics of clinical practice and/or scientific research (PPP)
- CL03.6 Demonstrate competence in appropriate interpersonal and team-working skills (KTS)
- CL03.7 Apply numerical, problem-solving and practical skills (KTS)
- CL03.8 Communicate clearly ideas, concepts and numerical information via appropriate means (KTS)
- CL03.9 Reflect upon own career-related skills, knowledge and awareness (PPP)

How will you learn?

Learning methods

Much of the learning activities of the course rely on a blended approach which mixes classroom-based activities with on-line study material. Planned learning activities relate directly to the stated learning outcomes which have been defined to reflect both subject-related knowledge, intellectual and manual or practical skills along with an awareness of the professional and ethical contexts within which disciplines must operate. In addition to the formal programmed teaching & learning sessions, the School operates a series of research seminars and 'academic conversations' given by invited expert speakers or staff from within the university. Attendance at such events allows all students within the School the chance to learn about cutting-edge research and scientific developments.

Self-directed and tutor-directed private study forms a significant part of the learning experience. Laboratory-based practicals will begin to develop the necessary 'hands-on' skills required within the chosen discipline. Tutorials provide additional support and opportunities for students to develop or enhance appropriate skills and to gain confidence in their studies.

Teaching methods

The learning and the teaching of the course relies on a mixture of face-to-face teaching and tutorial sessions using both didactic and student-centred styles. This strategy is appropriately supported with technology-enhanced learning where applicable to encourage mastery of the knowledge base.

Assessment methods

In order for students to demonstrate they have met the course learning outcomes the foundation course offers a variety of assessment types allowing students to evidence their skills and knowledge via written and oral means. The assessment menu across the course will consist of individual work including open & closed in-class-tests, essays, objective tests, and data-based exercises. Some aspects of these individual summative assessments include group-work skills.

Typically, the diet of assessments for a module consists of two or three summative exercises. Two modules are assessed via coursework only. Others use a combination of open or closed in-class-tests, plus coursework elements.

Attempting an assessment is not simply a means to determine attainment in a particular area, but is also a learning opportunity. Thus, formative (practice) assessments, including 'mock' examinations and exercises on examination preparation, self- assessment tests, and monitoring & feedback by tutors during continuous activities will help students to self-evaluation of their command of the material. This enables students to adapt their learning strategy according to individual need, leading them to become self-directed learners.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

The overall approach to education in the Foundation for Life Sciences is that we support students to be prepared to succeed at Level 4 of our Life Sciences undergraduate programmes. In this regard, the syllabuses and assessments in the modules of the Foundation in Life Science are specifically designed to underpin knowledge areas and assessment approaches that are present in the Level 4 Life Science modules. So our approach is one of spiral curriculum across the L3 modules to support the L4 modules.

As the year progresses Tutors work on increasing and improving student independence and self-direction. Students are encouraged to recognize the prior skills and knowledge they bring to the course, and to build on these during the experience of studies during the year. This approach reaches it's culmination in the final assessment of the BiA module where students reflect on their studies across the year. Here they reflectively focus on specified aspects of their own career direction, study practice, ethical science practice, and ethical professional practice. Students are then able to self-identify their focus in studies for the next 6-18 months that will lead them toward their self-identified goals.

With a significant number of students having reasonable adjustments requiring the publication of lecture slides at least 48h in advance of the class, these materials are made available to all students on Blackboard across all modules. Slides and content uploaded are checked for accessibility and steps taken to ensure equity of access (e.g. use of alternative text for images, screen reading order etc.). Reasonable adjustments such as extra time, are added to Blackboard so that online tests are updated for these students to include this.

Across the modules of the course, a diversity of perspectives and voices are presented to students during lectures and seminars. Students are also supported to work collaboratively in seminars, in labs, and also in assignments. This, alongside exploration of ethical practice in various professional frames, offers a valuing of collaboration and of differing viewpoint to achieve an identified aim.

The modules that make up this course support student development via the use of formative experiences during which student can explore their skills and knowledge and receive developmental feedback from Tutors. These formative experiences may be lab and/or seminar experience where the student can interact individually with Tutors, and also includes mock-assessments where Tutor feedback helps the student identify their individual learning needs and can also act as a signpost for additional support where needed. Across the modules there are a range of assessment methods used which cover a variety of professional activities that science professionals will carry out.

Graduate Attribute	**Evident in Course Outcomes**
Critical and creative thinker	CL03.1, CL03.2, CL03.3, CL03.4
Literate and effective communicator	CL03.1, CL03.2, CL03.3, CL03.7, CL03.8
Entrepreneurial	CL03.6, CL03.7
Global in outlook and engaged in communities	CL03.2
Socially, ethically and environmentally aware	CL03.5, CL03.9

Course Structure

This section shows the core and option modules available as part of the course and their credit value. Full-time Undergraduate students study 120 credits per year. Course structures can be subject to change each academic year following feedback from a variety of sources.

Modules are described as:

- **Core** modules are compulsory and must be undertaken by all students on the course.
- **Option** modules give you a choice of modules and are normally related to your subject area.
- **Electives**: are modules from across the either the whole University or your College. Such modules allow you to broaden your academic experience. For example, where electives are indicated you may choose to commence the study of a foreign language alongside your course modules (and take this through to the final year), thereby adding further value to your degree.
- Additional information may also be included above each level for example where you must choose one of two specific modules.

Modules

Level 3

Award of Foundation Certificate available

Somewhat unusually, the Foundation does not offer students any option or elective modules. The subject menu is restricted to those aspects of basic science which will provide a solid platform for further study.

All modules at L4, 5 and 6 are dependent upon the student's chosen degree pathway and exit award.

Course Specific Regulations

Module Code	Module Title	Status	UK credit	ECTS
3BIOL004W	Biology	Core	20	10
3BIOL003W	Bioscience in Action	Core	20	10
3CHEM004W	Chemistry	Core	20	10
3ACHE004W	Critical Thinking in a Changing World	Core	20	10
3ACHE003W	Introduction to Academic Practice	Core	20	10
3PHYM002W	Introduction to Physiology	Core	20	10

Please note: Not all option modules will necessarily be offered in any one year. In addition, timetabling and limited spaces may mean you cannot register for your first choice of option modules.

Professional body accreditation or other external references

Not applicable to the level 3 provision. The BSc (Hons) Biochemistry; BSc (Hons) Biological Sciences; BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences; BSc (Hons) Human Nutrition and BSc (Hons) Pharmacology and Physiology are accredited by the Royal Society of Biology for the purpose of meeting in part the academic and experience requirement for the Membership and Chartered Biologist (CBiol).The Biomedical Sciences degree is accredited by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). Honours graduates can expect to become registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as Biomedical Scientists, provided they fulfil the additional HCPC requirements of competencies through suitable employment and undertaking the IBMS certificate of competence. The Human Nutrition degree is accredited by the Association for Nutrition (AfN) and graduates from this course are eligible to join the Register as an Associate Nutritionist.

Course management

Your course is managed through the School of Life Sciences within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Course Leader and the teaching team will meet you in the induction programme and can help you with enrolment, registration, and orientation to the university, its processes and the culture of higher education. The Course Leader is responsible for development and management of the course in conjunction with the Head of School and the School Director of Teaching, Learning and Quality.

Academic regulations

The current Handbook of Academic Regulations is available at westminster.ac.uk/academic-regulations.

Course specific regulations apply to some courses.

Academic Support

Upon arrival, an induction programme will introduce you to the staff responsible for the course, the campus on which you will be studying, the Library and IT facilities, additional support available and to your Campus Registry. You will be provided with the Course Handbook, which provides detailed information about the course. Each course has a course leader or Director of Studies. All students enrolled on a full-time course and part time students registered for more than 60 credits a year have a personal tutor, who provides advice and guidance on academic matters. The University uses a Virtual Learning Environment called Blackboard where students access their course materials, and can communicate and collaborate with staff and other students. Further information on Blackboard can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/studies/your-student-journey/when-you-arrive/blackboard

The Academic Learning Development Centre supports students in developing the skills required for higher education. As well as online resources in Blackboard, students have the opportunity to attend Study Skills workshops and one to one appointments. Further information on the Academic Learning Development Centre can be found at westminster.ac.uk/academic-learning-development.

Learning support includes four libraries, each holding a collection of resources related to the subjects taught at that site. Students1 can search the entire library collection online through the Library Search service to find and reserve printed books, and access electronic resources (databases, e-journals, e-books). Students can choose to study in the libraries, which have areas for silent and group study, desktop computers, laptops for loan, photocopying and printing services. They can also choose from several computer rooms at each campus where desktop computers are available with the general and specialist software that supports the courses taught in their College. Students can also securely connect their own laptops and mobile devices to the University wireless network.

Support Services

The University of Westminster Student and Academic Services department provide advice and guidance on accommodation, financial and legal matters, personal counselling, health and disability issues, careers, specialist advice for international students and the chaplaincy providing multi-faith guidance. Further information on the advice available to students can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/student-advice

The University of Westminster Students' Union also provides a range of facilities to support students during their time at the University. Further information on UWSU can be found at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/students-union

How do we ensure the quality of our courses and continuous improvement?

The course was initially approved by a University Validation Panel. University Panels normally include internal peers from the University, academic(s) from another university. a representative from industry and a Student Advisor.

The course is also monitored each year by the College to ensure it is running effectively and that issues which might affect the student experience have been appropriately addressed. Staff will consider evidence about the course, including the evidence of student surveys, student progression and achievement and reports from external examiners, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and make changes where necessary.

A Course revalidation takes place periodically to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and that the skills gained on the course continue to be relevant to employers. Students meet with revalidation panels to provide feedback on their experiences. Student feedback from previous years is also part of the evidence used to assess how the course has been running.

How do we act on student feedback?

Student feedback is important to the University and student views are taken seriously. Student feedback is gathered in a variety of ways.

- Through student engagement activities at Course/Module level, students have the opportunity to express their voice in the running of their course. Course representatives are elected to expressly represent the views of their peers. The University and the Students' Union work together to provide a full induction to the role of the course representatives.

- There are also School Representatives appointed jointly by the University and the Students' Union who meet with senior School staff to discuss wider issues affecting student experience across the School. Student representatives are also represented on key College and University committees.;
- All students are invited to complete a questionnaire before the end of each module. The feedback from this will inform the module leader on the effectiveness of the module and highlight areas that could be enhanced.
- Final year Undergraduate students will be asked to complete the National Student Survey which helps to inform the national university league tables.

This programme specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the course and the learning outcomes that a student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate, if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. This specification is supplemented by the Course Handbook, Module proforma and Module Handbooks provided to students.

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