Foundation Year
Frequently asked questions

General questions about the course

What is the success rate for students during the Foundation Year?
Our admissions policy is quite selective. If we have made you an offer then it's because we think you have the potential to succeed and do well. Success on the Foundation Year has a lot to do with the attitude and maturity of individual students. Those students who engage in the course, take part in what is on offer, have a good attendance record and keep up with the work will in 95 per cent of cases go on to be successful. There are of course some students who fail and are not allowed to progress. For the overall course, our progression rate is typically around 85 per cent. This is a very good progression rate for a foundation course, compared to the national average, and reflects the level of preparation and care that we offer our students.

What is the success rate for Foundation Year students when they go on to the first year of their degree?
Students progressing from the Foundation Year onto their first year have a very high success rate, many going on to obtain top scores at the end of the first year. There are a number of reasons for this; obviously the Foundation Year itself is very much tailored to our own undergraduate courses and so modules you study on the Foundation Year are designed to lead nicely into first year modules. Another advantage of the in-house Foundation Year at Nottingham, is that progressing students go into their first year with a network of friends, and knowledge of the institution, its facilities, staff and processes. It is such a great start for Foundation Year students when they go into their first year because they are able to 'hit the ground running' from day one.

How is the Foundation Year taught and who teaches it?
The Foundation Year is taught by academic staff from within the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Science, many of whom will also teach on other years of the degree programme. There is a core team of Foundation Year staff who are very much committed to the success of the course and the students who are on it.

Modules are taught on the main University campus alongside other undergraduate students. The course is taught through a mixture of lectures, tutorials, problem workshops, laboratory exercises and directed study.

Will I be allocated a personal tutor on the Foundation Year?
Yes. All students are appointed a personal tutor for the duration of their Foundation Year course. As well as having regular meetings with their personal tutor, students are encouraged to contact them if they have any problems or concerns during the year. Personal tutors also take a specific interest in their personal tutees, keep track of their progress, and try to make sure that individual students are aware of when things are working out and when things are not.

Are there any trips or field studies during the Foundation Year?
Yes, we try to arrange ‘away days’ during the year where we visit a company or organisation relevant to some aspect of the course. As well as being informative and interesting, the ‘away days’ offer a good opportunity for staff and students to get to know each other in a less formal setting.

Will I be able to use all the University facilities like other undergraduates?
Yes. As a Foundation Year student at The University of Nottingham you are an undergraduate student from day one. This means that you have the same level of access to facilities and opportunities just like any other undergraduate student at the University. We like to think of the Foundation Year as year zero of four or five year degree programme.

Will I need to buy any books or equipment while on the Foundation Year?
On the Foundation Year, we provide comprehensive printed and online notes, tutorial sheets and access to resources. You can access the vast resources of the University library and other online systems, journals and software etc. All of these are included in your ‘fees’. However, some students like to purchase additional books although this is by no means necessary or compulsory. You will need to supply your own paper, pens and a basic scientific calculator (eg. CASIO FX83 or similar would be ideal). Most students also find that having their own computer is particularly useful; PC or MAC, it’s up to you! Whilst at the University you can also take advantage of lots of discount offers and preferential ‘educational’ prices for things like computers.
Frequently asked questions

What will I study?

What modules will I study on the Foundation Year?
Which modules you will study on the Foundation Year depends to a large extent on the pathway you have chosen. It is your destination department (where you hope to go after the Foundation Year) that decides what options you need to take. For example, if you have chosen to go to Mechanical Engineering after the Foundation Year, then you will need to study Engineering Maths and Mechanics in addition to certain other Science topics. As another example, Biology students will be required to study module options in Biology, Maths for Biology, Psychology and Chemistry. You can find out more at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/foundationyear

Is it guaranteed that ALL modules will be offered?
We always offer the core modules but we don't guarantee to always offer all of the optional modules. The options that we offer will vary from year to year depending upon student numbers and staff availability. We usually need about 10 students on a module in order to keep it open. If we need to close a module due to insufficient student numbers on a particular pathway, then we will offer you an alternative that will still allow you progression onto your chosen route (destination pathway). During the first week of the course, staff will be on-hand to offer lots of information and help in choosing modules.

What if I decide to change pathway during the Foundation Year?
When students arrive on the Foundation Year, they usually have an idea about what field of Engineering or Science they wish to study afterwards. This information is used to decide exactly which modules they will need to take. Although you need to decide at the start, there are many opportunities for you to change pathway during the Foundation Year. For example, if you start by choosing the Mechanical Engineering pathway but later decide that you wish to take Electrical Engineering this is possible and usually allowed. Similarly, Biology students may decide after the first semester that they wish to change pathway to Psychology, this may also be possible. There are restrictions to this though; if a student has taken Mechanics but wishes to change to Biology, this would be very difficult due to the modules choices they will have taken.

Do I have to study English Language modules on the course?
International students, who already hold the approved English Language qualification (eg IELTS) at the correct level for direct entry to year one of their chosen degree pathway do not need to take additional English modules on their Foundation Year course. Alternatively, students, who enter the Foundation Year with an IELTS 5.5 (no element less than 5.5), or equivalent, will be required to take the in-course English Language modules during the Foundation Year. Students, who enter the Foundation Year course with an IELTS 5.5 and no element less than 5.0, or equivalent, will also be required to take the in-course English Language modules but additionally these students will only be permitted to enter the course on the non-integrated (one year) route of the course.

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last thing we want is for you to fail the course because you are taking too much on.

What's the timetable like?
Like all engineering and science courses the timetable is quite full and contains a mix of lectures, tutorials, workshops and practical sessions. All routes on the Foundation Year have a similar looking timetable. Students typically have around 22 hours of class contact time per week. In addition there is directed study, follow-up work from classes, reading and writing reports and revision. We recommend that students should expect the course to require around 38 hours of work each week ie. it's a standard full-time working week! This of course depends upon you as an individual, how efficiently you can work, how organised you are and what aspects of the course you need to put extra time into.

When I'm on the course, will I be able to get extra help?
Yes. We offer a number of different possibilities for you to get extra help on the course, this is in addition to being able to go to see your module tutor or personal tutor if you are having problems. Each year we put on extra small group support classes if and when students need them. These are usually run by either past Foundation Year students who are still on their undergraduate course and/or research students from within the department. We also operate a student mentor scheme in which past Foundation Year students are assigned to and encouraged to meet up with our new Foundation Year students. This is a useful opportunity for new students to find out about the course and how best make a success of it.

How many students are on the course?
This varies from year to year. Usually, for the September intake, there are around 65 Engineering students and 35 Science students. For the January intake, we usually have around 20 students. We usually have around 50 per cent home and 50 per cent international students.

Where can I find out more about the course?
You can find out more at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/foundationyear
Frequently asked questions

Passing the course

Will there be lots of mathematics on my course?
Yes! For engineering students and for those on the Mathematics, Computing and Physics pathways, the mathematics modules are very important. If mathematics is a really big issue then these pathways may not be right for you. Having said that, the mathematics teaching team are outstandingly good at helping students to get to grips with the mathematical content of the course. They use lots of innovative teaching methods and provide a huge amount of support and helpful advice for our students.

How is the course assessed?
The course is assessed through a combination of in-course assessments, essays, presentations, lab reports and progress tests. Most modules also have a final examination at the end of each semester. Typically assessment weighting is based on 60 per cent Final Exam and 40 per cent coursework. Some modules such as Study Skills and Computer Methods are 100 per cent coursework based.

Is the course all work and no play?
It is a tough course and there is a lot to do but most students find time to follow other interests, take part in various sport and social activities. An important part of coming to University is meeting new friends, finding new interests and getting involved in the different activities that you have not done before - we are keen for you to experience that part of University life too.

I have done some of the work already, can I drop certain modules?
No. In order to complete a year at The University of Nottingham, you need to study 120 credits. Most modules account for 10 credits in each semester. If you drop a module because you think that you have already covered the work then you will not have enough credits to be allowed to progress under the rules of the University. It may be possible to offer you an alternative module but you will need to discuss this with your tutor first. In practice, although the Foundation Year covers something similar to the UK A-level qualification, it tends to be narrower and deeper in the subjects that it covers. For example, the Maths course that we offer to engineers does not cover such a wide range of topics as the UK A-level Maths however the topics that it does cover are the ones specifically needed for your destination pathway and we tend to go far deeper into these areas than the UK A-level would.

Is the course really hard? Will I be able to cope?
If we have offered you a place on the course then it's because we think you have the right skills and/or background to be able to cope. If we didn't think you had a good chance of passing then we would not consider making you an offer. The course is tough though and many students find parts of it hard. However, staff operate a policy on providing additional support and advice to students and are willing to meet to discuss problems as and when needed. When you are on the course, if you find that you are struggling with some aspect, the first thing to do is talk to your personal tutor and/or module tutor. We also regularly provide extra tutorial sessions and additional workshops so that we can provide a high level of support for our students.

What do you mean when you say 'guaranteed progression providing that you pass'?
In order to progress to year one, for most routes you are required to: pass the Foundation Year and obtain an average of 50 per cent at the first attempt.

You are allowed to 'compensate' a limited amount of modules, for example, if you fail a module (get less than 40 per cent) and your overall average is acceptable you can still pass the course. However, "compensation" is not allowed between certain core modules eg Mathematics for the Engineers (engineers must pass all of the maths modules), biologists must pass the Biology module with no compensation allowed.

Two pathways have a higher progression average requirement these are Psychology (60 per cent average) and Neuroscience (60 per cent average). Also, for the MSc Nutrition and Dietetics route, students will be required to re-apply and attend an interview. This is due to it being an NHS funded route.

What if I don't get the required course average at the first attempt?
If you pass the Foundation Year with the required modules but with an average between 40 and 49 per cent then you will not be eligible for guaranteed progression to first year. Instead you will be considered on an individual basis by 'destination schools'. This is a bit like 'clearing' within the UCAS system. If we think that you are likely to be in this situation, we will talk to you as early as possible in the year and make sure that you are aware of the situation and your different options. If a student fails the Foundation Year (ie obtains an average of less than 40 per cent and/or has not passed the required modules), they will be offered re-sits to pass the Foundation Year. In this situation if the student passes re-sits they can obtain a Foundation Year certificate, they will not be considered for progression to the first year.

What if I completely fail the Foundation, can I re-take it?
No. If you completely fail the course then that will be the end of your time at The University of Nottingham – this does not include your right to take re-sit examinations, this is automatic. But, if you fail re-sits, you will not be allowed to re-start the whole course again.

At the end of the Foundation Year will I need to apply for the first year via UCAS?
No, you don't need to re-apply to the University via UCAS. Progression to first year is guaranteed and automatic as long as you meet the progression requirements. This does not apply to the MSc Nutrition & Dietetics route as described above.

Can I use the The University of Nottingham Foundation Year as a qualification to enter a different UK University?
Yes! If you decide to go to a different UK University at the end of your Foundation Year, you can usually do this. You would need to apply to your 'new' university via UCAS. From past experience, other Universities are happy to accept students from the The University of Nottingham Foundation Year. If you leave The University of Nottingham at the end of the Foundation Year and you have successfully completed the course, you would be awarded a Foundation Certificate. We would be sorry to lose you but would of course support you in whatever decision you make.

Do I get a certificate at the end?
If you pass the course and progress directly into year one of your chosen course at The University of Nottingham then you will not receive a certificate. This is because you are considered to be progressing from one year of your course to the next; much like you wouldn't expect to receive a certificate when you move from year one to year two. However, if you decide to leave the University at the end of the Foundation year and you have successfully passed the course then you will be awarded a Foundation Certificate.
Questions about admissions

Is the Foundation Year just for International Students?
No, the Foundation Year at The University of Nottingham is offered to UK (Home), European and International students. In fact, that is one of the great things about the The University of Nottingham Foundation Year; it offers a very wide cultural mix of different students. Often International students take the course because they need to bring their qualifications from home up to the equivalent level as the UK A-level. Home and European students on the other hand, often need to take the Foundation as a ‘conversion’ course, giving them extra maths or science as required for the course they wish to progress on to.

Why do the fees change when students progress from Foundation to first Year?
For International students, the Foundation year is offered at a reduced rate compared to the standard international undergraduate fee. This means that when you progress from the Foundation year into first year, your fees will go up to the standard undergraduate fee level. For home students, the fee is set at the standard home student fee level for the University and this will not change for the duration of your entire undergraduate course.

What’s the difference between the September and January start routes?
The September course starts in September and runs through to June, whereas the January course starts in January and runs through to mid-August. Both courses are two semesters long. The September course is available for all Engineering and Science pathways but the January course is more restricted and is available mainly for the Engineering pathways. Some Science pathways are also typically available via the January course; these include: Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science. However, science students taking the January route should be aware that they will study on a restricted set of modules, due to the lower student numbers, they will typically study the same modules as the Engineering students. Generally the September intake has around 100 students and the January intake is much smaller, typically with around 20 students.

Why will my course code change when I go from Foundation Year to first year?
When you join the Foundation, you will go onto one of our standard Foundation course codes eg H100, H102 or CFG0. Although these courses are listed as ‘five-year’ courses, in practice ALL students who progress will have a change in course code going into year one, ie you will change code to your chosen destination pathway code.

I applied for the Science Foundation Year. Why is my offer from the Faculty of Engineering?
It’s not a mistake, don’t worry. The Faculty of Engineering manages Foundation programmes for the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering. For the duration of the Foundation, your ‘home’ will be Faculty of Engineering. After the Foundation you will transfer over to your destination.

Can I come for a course taster day?
Yes. We would be very happy for you to come to the University and tag-along with some of the students who are currently on the course. This will give you an opportunity to see what ‘a day in the life’ of a Foundation Year student it really like. Usually on a visit day, you will have chance to meet a number of the tutors, sit in on some classes and other activities that are taking place. On a visit day we will pair you up with an existing student who will act as your ‘chaperone’ for the day.

Please note
Regarding the specific information given in this ‘Frequently asked questions’ document, although correct at the time of writing, some details may change during the life of this document. It is intended to be illustrative of the type of experience, mode of study, rules and level of support that you are likely to have if you take up a place on the Foundation Year.

In writing this document we have tried to be as open and clear as possible and to give you a realistic view of what to expect on the course. If you have any specific questions and/or concerns about the course and would like to talk through some aspect with a member of staff further, then please do get in-touch.

We're here to help, get in touch:

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