In-sessional Orientation Course

Course description August 2019

1) Structure

The course takes place over five days and contains the following lessons and lecture which take place over four teaching days:

- Writing x 3 lessons
- Reading x 1 lesson
- Listening x 1 lesson
- Speaking x 1 lesson
- Lecture x 1
- Lecture Review x 1

A number of readings will be given to the students which will form the basis of a short piece of writing to be submitted at the end of the week. The topic will be approaches to Academic English writing style.

Students are provided with a handbook with lessons and readings.

At the end of the course Postgraduate students have to submit a 800-1000 word assignment and 500 words for Undergraduates. The essay is to be submitted by 3pm on the final Friday on BLE (Bloomsbury Learning Environment, the SOAS Virtual Learning Environment).

The course is similar in structure to a week-long lecture cycle, with a lecture and lecture review on the second day with a piece of writing required at the end.

The course is very intensive and students will be tired at the end of it. Unfortunately it will interfere to some extent with their experience of Welcome week.

The course is only open to those students who have an In-sessional Orientation Recommendation.

Students can check their eligibility by looking at their offer letter.

2) Aims

The course is designed to support students who have scores slightly below the regular In-sessional entry requirements in reading and listening or who have e.g. more than two subscores in IELTS at 6.5. The entry profile for those with IELTS is overall 6.5 with listening 6.0, reading 6.0, writing 6.5, speaking 6.5 or 7.0 overall with more than two subscores at 6.5.

Students do not have the full opportunities of a Pre-sessional course but are given academic English and skills support for a week before the academic teaching begins.

Because the course takes place in Welcome Week it is technically not a Pre-sessional but an In-sessional course. Also it lacks the time available for a Pre-sessional so is effectively a week long
lecture cycle with academic skills support. In one week there is a limit to what can be achieved and the main focus is on writing skills.

This course is not meant to replace regular In-sessional courses but to complement them. Most students would be expected to enter into further In-sessional courses to consolidate on what they have learnt in the Orientation course. This course is too short in itself to provide all the answers, but should offer some strong support for students before they have to deal with their first essay.

3) Learning Outcomes

It is hoped the following learner outcomes will be achieved:

- A basic understanding of notetaking and summary/paraphrase writing skills for reading and listening situations.
- The ability to read academic articles and summarise and synthesise ideas and arguments from them in relation to an essay question and relate this to their experience of a lecture and seminar discussion.
- Some understanding of how stress timed rhythm can help speech patterns in English.
- Some confidence in speaking in English in a seminar situation.
- The experience of sitting in an hour long lecture in academic English with demanding content.
- Some understanding of the following areas of academic writing: title analysis, the thesis statement, planning, counter-argument, in-text citation, use of quotation, structuring paragraphs, academic style, writing introductions and conclusions.
- An experience of writing against the clock and submitting an assignment on BLE.
- Some confidence and resourcefulness when going into course lectures and seminars and when facing their first assignment and reading lists.

4) Assessment

This course is non-credit bearing and assessment is formative rather than summative. Assessment goals will be met in the following way:

- Good attendance. 80% attendance is expected but full attendance is preferred.
- Active participation in classroom activities.
- Completion of the essay at the end of the course.
- Understanding of students’ weaknesses by their teacher and themselves which should lead to some useful and relevant In-sessional referrals.