



## Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

**Title:** 4-week and 10-week Pre-sessional Courses and Presearch

### **Transition(s) the practice supports:**

The English for Academic Purposes Pre-sessional Courses support student transitions from their own educational systems into the academic, cultural and linguistic environment of the University of St Andrews, and helps them acquire the skills needed for academic success here.

### **Abstract:**

The 4-week Pre-sessional Course is designed for both undergraduate and postgraduate international students who do not use English as their first language, to help prepare them for the linguistic and academic demands of their studies in St Andrews.

Our longer course is designed specifically for students planning to undertake Master's programmes, typically in the Schools of Management, Mathematics or Computer Science.

Our Presearch course is for PhD offer holders who may be required to familiarise themselves with the discourse of their discipline, in English, before embarking on their research. This programme is more flexible in terms of length and has three separate start dates, from January.

All Pre-sessional Courses are delivered by experienced English language teachers who are members of staff of English Language Teaching (ELT), working in collaboration with staff of the receiving academic Schools across the University.

### **Description:**

Pre-sessional Courses have been taught at the University of St Andrews since the late 1980s and were the first courses specifically designed to meet the needs of newly-arrived international students. The combination of orientation to the University, the opportunity for advanced English language study integrated with academic skills became the model for many subsequent courses offered by English Language Teaching, including international undergraduate and postgraduate foundation programmes leading to degree study across all the University's disciplines.

Pre-sessional students now come from some thirty countries, predominantly from Europe, Asia and South America, and interesting and enjoyable intercultural interactions are another hallmark of Pre-sessionals. The courses blend language development, with particular emphasis given to academic writing, and appropriate use of sources, with lectures and seminars delivered by academics from

across the institution. Students are taught partly in Arts, Science and Management-oriented groups so that some aspects of the course can be more tailored to their needs.

Assessment on the 4-week course takes the form of a subject-specific written assignment, including one-to-one oral and written feedback and guidance at the draft stage, a presentation with both peer and teacher feedback and a critical article review. Students on longer courses have more written assignments, including a group research report. All Pre-sessional Courses and assessments are underpinned by our principles of teaching and learning at ELT.

These are that students will develop:

<b>Attributes (of)</b>	<b>Knowledge (of)</b>	<b>Skills (of)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflectiveness</li> <li>2. Criticality</li> <li>3. Autonomy</li> <li>4. Confidence</li> <li>5. Academic Integrity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Academic literacy (conventions)</li> <li>2. Discipline-specific language</li> <li>3. Institutional services</li> <li>4. Process and form of assessment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critical analysis of texts and data</li> <li>2. Incorporating sources and evidence in academic work</li> <li>3. Effective participation in a range of academic and non-academic contexts (settings)</li> </ol>
The appropriateness, accuracy and fluency in language to engage in/with all of the above.		

The academic lecture and seminar components help to introduce students to the style, pace and expectations the University has of them in the particular academic setting as well as help develop listening and note-taking skills, and raise confidence to ask questions and share opinions in small and larger study groups.

The materials used on our Pre-sessional Courses for English language teaching are designed in-house and have been evaluated positively by students and external examiners alike. The 4 and 10 week Pre-sessionals have been accredited by BALEAP (the global forum for EAP professionals) demonstrating that they are of a high standard.

As well as the English language development and academic lectures, the Pre-sessional Courses also have introductory sessions with the Library, Student Services, Careers and other student-facing services. There is also a full social programme to complement the academic courses, ranging from welcome parties and ceilidh dancing through to visits to Scottish cities, and places of historical and geographical interest.

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