

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What courses comprise the English Language Foundation Unit? The English Language Foundation Unit offers courses intended to meet the writing skill needs of the different academic disciplines:

- *FOUN 1001 – English for Academic Purposes* caters to the academic writing skills required for studies in the Faculties of Humanities and Education and Social Sciences.
- *FOUN 1103 – Argument and Report Writing* meets the skill needs of students reading for degrees in Education and Law and for majors offered by the Faculty of Humanities and Education other than Literatures in English.
- *FOUN 1104 – Writing About Literature* - caters to the skills required of students pursuing degrees in either Literatures in English (LIE) or English Language and Literature with Education (ELLE). It is also highly recommended for students doing Spanish and French.
- *FOUN 1105 – Scientific and Technical Writing* is geared to the needs of students in the Faculty of Science and Technology and the Faculty of Food and Agriculture.
- *FOUN 1106 – Academic English for Research Purposes* is an option available to students in the School of Education and Faculty of Social Sciences, depending on their prerequisites.
- *FOUN 1107 – Writing in the Visual, Performing and Carnival Arts* is compulsory for Creative and Festival Arts students.
- *FDMU 0005 – Preparatory Academic Writing* is compulsory for students reading for the Certificate in Music.

2. Why is it mandatory to do these courses?

There are four important reasons for doing the Foundation English course required by your faculty. The first is that students often erroneously believe that writing a formal academic essay at tertiary level is no different from previous essay writing that they have done at secondary level. The courses rectify this and develop primary skills. In addition, the skills that are developed in the course required by your faculty are essential for all other courses done later in the faculty. They are also essential for the professional skills you need to demonstrate after you graduate and they provide the foundation upon which you will build if you decide to do postgraduate work.

3. Do I need previous experience in writing essays in English?

You do. Evidence of this experience is gleaned from the prerequisites for each course. This information is available in the course information on the English Language Foundation page on the University of the West Indies website.

4. If I have done similar courses at another institution, can I be exempted from these courses?

Exemptions are allowed only if courses already completed share a high degree of parity with our courses. An official application to the Dean's Office along with a transcript from the previous institution that details the course, its assessment modes and your actual score are necessary.

5. Can I defer doing the foundation courses required by my faculty if my first year workload is heavy?

Actually, your workload in First Year includes the foundation course(s). It is strongly advised that you do not defer any of them. If you do, you will be doing yourself a grave disservice because you will struggle to produce academic writing in the other courses instead of writing with the ease and confidence that the foundation courses develop.

6. How are these courses delivered?

FOUN 1001 is taught in Semesters One and Two. FOUN 1104, FOUN 1106 and FDMU 0005 are taught in Semester One while FOUN 1103, FOUN 1105 and FOUN 1107 are taught in Semester Two. Delivery of all has three aspects: plenary sessions, tutorials and a web enabled electronic platform known as myelearning. In addition, remedial sessions are available for students who need to refresh their knowledge of the grammar and other mechanics of Standard English as well as academic writing fundamentals. Courses are also offered during the mid-year programme dependent upon availability of resources and student interest.

7. How many hours each week does a course require?

The weekly plenary is of two hours duration and the weekly tutorial is one hour long; both require compulsory attendance. In addition to this in-class time requirement, another five hours are recommended for small group writing and peer evaluation each week. Those who register for remedial sessions will add another hour for the in-class remedial session and one more for individual work outside of class.

8. Since seven to nine hours are needed each week, can part-time students do the course?

The courses cater for part-time students by having plenary, tutorial and remedial sessions in the evening as well as during the day. It is up to the individual to clear the number of hours needed in their personal schedules.

9. What are the differences between the plenary and the tutorial?

Only a few plenary sessions are offered per week. You must choose one and attend, since the fundamental concepts of the course are provided during the plenary sessions. Many texts, which can supplement the information provided during the plenary sessions, are recommended on the course outlines. However, developing writing skills is a practical undertaking and the tutorial puts the information shared during the plenary and found in the recommended texts into action. Attending a plenary alone is not enough; neither is attending the tutorial alone. Every student must be registered in and attend a tutorial. There are many of these each week, sometimes up to fifteen per day when these are at peak available times. The tutorials use student manuals and guided myeLearning activities – in addition to students' in-class writing activities.

10. How do I register for the tutorial?

Find a tutorial that is suitable for you, based on the schedule of classes found on your faculty's notice boards or on the campus general timetable, bearing in mind that it would be courteous to leave the late classes for employed students who have no choice about which classes they attend. Navigate to myelearning and simply click on your tutorial session to secure a place in the group. A tutorial is limited to 20 students to ensure that each person gets the kind of attention s/he deserves. If you delay in going to a group at a time that is most convenient to you, it may be filled before you register.

11. How much of my own writing will I do in class?

Every tutorial will entail some degree of individual writing and guidelines for further individual work outside of class.

12. Apart from the actual teaching hours in the tutorial and the plenary, what kind of support is provided to students?

Three types of support are provided – remedial and administrative.

What is meant by remedial support?

Remedial support refers to the small group help that is provided for students who are feeling unsure of their language skills after having been away from academic life for a while, or those who find 'doing English' distasteful and trying and have

therefore missed some of the fundamentals along the way. One can choose to access this support if one feels in need of it. Alternatively, if a tutor finds that such help is needed, s/he may recommend the help. In addition to group remedial support, individual support is given for those students who feel they need additional feedback on their own writing. Essays are submitted to the Campus House office and specifically assigned members of staff assess and evaluate them and provide supportive feedback. Students meet with the examiner the week after submitting the essays and the areas that require improvement, which would have been noted on each script, are discussed.

What does administrative help refer to?

Administrative support consists of the kind of help that is given through the Secretariat and Administrative Assistant, which covers a wide range of individual matters that do not arise as a part of the general concerns that are discussed here. Such support is warmly given during the office hours every day. Further, we have student assistants on duty to assist you from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. each day in the Secretariat of the English Language Foundation Unit, Ground Floor, Humanities Building!

13. How are the courses assessed?

Assessment consists of both formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation tasks seek to provide continuous development of skills and may be done as individual work or in small groups. These do not count for credit. The summative evaluation is five-fold. During the course there are online quizzes and three take-home assignments, two of which are group-based. Together, these seek to assess the student's ability in the skills being developed by the course. Feedback is provided by your tutor during in-class consultations so that performance on the final exam will be improved. The in-course assignments count for fifty percent of the final grade, as do the related final examinations. A pass in both in-course assignment and the final exam is required to be rewarded a pass each course.

14. Why do people complain about not passing these courses?

There are many reasons. The major one is that people do not recognise that writing is not an innate ability. As with every other skill, it is one at which a person develops greater and greater facility in direct proportion to the level of time and effort that s/he invests. In addition, a pass in any Foundation English course is an indicator of possession of a very specific body of skills. A pass in FOUN 1001, for example, tells someone that the person who has passed understands the nature of formal academic writing, has an acceptable command of standard English which is the language of formal academic writing at our University and country, can

distinguish between expository writing and other modes and thus understands the difference between arguing and explaining, and understands the structured nature of essay-writing. If the required amount of time and effort are not invested in developing these abilities, then one does not pass.

15. If I do not pass the course what can I do?

If you pass the coursework but not the exam, you may carry the coursework for one re-sitting of the exam thereafter within a period of two academic years. You go to the Secretariat during office hours and fill out a coursework transfer form. You must still register for the course and in a tutorial group after this but you need not necessarily attend classes if you believe that you understand the errors that caused you to fail the exam. If you find it inexplicable that you have failed you may request a consultation through Examinations Section of the University. You take a copy of the request to the Secretariat and you will be called as soon as a consultation can be arranged. If you do not agree that you have failed, you may request that your paper be re-marked. Please note the difference between a review and a re-mark in this context. If you request a review, you will not be remarked. Note also that re-marking of your paper does not imply that it will be receive an improved grade. All papers must demonstrate the skills discussed above.

16. Where do I get further information about these courses?

Administration of the courses takes place at the English Language Foundation Unit, Ground Floor, Humanities Building. The Coordinators' offices, the Secretariat and the Administrative Assistant's Office are all located there. The secretaries will happily provide you with any further information you need that is not provided at this site and refer you to a Coordinator if this is necessary. In addition, notices regarding the courses are posted and updated regularly on the notice board in the corridor, outside the office as well as on the notice board in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics and other faculty notice boards for the all the courses and on myelearning.