

Oxford International Year-Round Schools Curriculum Policy

The OIEG curriculum policy serves to support teachers and students at OIEG Year-Round schools by describing the framework, structure and rationale behind the work they do such that they can best satisfy our core principles and values as a company:

“to create life-enhancing learning experiences that help students worldwide to develop personally and professionally and that enrich their future opportunities. Our Core Values are at the heart of our business. They define who we are, how we work and guide how we act with each other and with other stakeholders. They’re our DNA - INTEGRITY: We build relationships through trust, honesty and respect; PASSION & PRIDE: We love what we do and strive for excellence; CARE: We put our students and their goals at the heart of everything we do; CREATIVITY: We are not afraid to be different and we celebrate innovation.” And we believe a SMILE goes a long way!

The policy consists of the following elements:

1. The Academic Framework
2. Syllabus Rationale and Definition
3. Structure of the Academic Year
4. Virtual Learning Campus
5. Measurement of Student Progress
6. Academic Support
7. End-of-course Reports and Certification
8. Junior Syllabus

1. The Academic Framework

The Academic Framework informs students and teachers about our teaching approach and what to expect in our lessons.

We believe that all lessons should:

- have clear objectives
- be student centred
- have observable outcomes

Activities in lessons should:

- clearly support the objectives of the lesson
- respond to and provide opportunities for emergent language
- represent a balance between accuracy and fluency
- encourage a realistic and communicative use of target language

Lessons as such should:

- have appropriate staging, timing and pace
- be structured in a way that enables the student to see clearly how progress is being made
- enable learners to participate in a variety of activities ranging from whole class work, group work, pair work and individual work

- show a balance between teacher and student-centred work
- ensure that all students are actively involved
- provide opportunities to deepen and broaden knowledge and understanding, and increase the student's ability to learn independently, build self-esteem and promote the development of good study skills
- encourage the development of 21st century skills including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication.

It is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that:

- teacher talking time in class is not excessive
- English is the main language of the classroom
- their language is adjusted to the level of the class and serves as an appropriate model
- instructions and explanations are given in a clear and supportive way
- appropriate moments and strategies are used for error correction and feedback
- vocal or active opposition to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs are openly challenged or reported to the designated onsite Prevent Officer

The classroom environment should:

- be marked by good rapport between teachers and students
- be supportive to learners
- promote fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs
- develop learner self-awareness and autonomy by taking into account individual student needs
- include effective use of the course book, whiteboard, objectives boards and other resources

2. Syllabus Rationale and Definition

While the Academic Framework informs teachers and students about our teaching approach and what to expect in our lessons, the Syllabus Aim and Syllabus Definition provide information about course planning and programmes of learning.

Syllabus Aim:

For all its courses, Oxford International YRS set out a clear academic system, both for teachers and students. The aims and factors involved in deciding on the style of the syllabus are:

- the need to guarantee a specific level, range of content, and a minimum qualitative level to our students
- the need to provide a set of objectives which allow the students to progress
- the requirement to provide supplementary materials for teachers to choose from including materials that open up the space for a critical discourse which engages with fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs
- the wish to utilise an effective and up-to-date range of materials
- the need to maintain a regulated class level system
- the responsibility to respond to an individual's or particular group of students' needs

Syllabus Definition:

To these ends, we provide a 'syllabus' for each level. Our definition of a syllabus is a document that:

- details what is expected of students at that level based on 'Can do statements' from the Common European Framework
- identifies skills and input areas that the schools expect to be taught at the respective level
- gives a breakdown of a textbook that provides the majority of materials
- provides guidance for staff on the aims of the level and how the course should be run
- allows for continuous enrolment and operational demands ensuring that student movement between classes is possible with the minimum of disruption to their course and programme of study

In line with the above, aim and definition, the basic unit of planning for Oxford International YRS courses is a week, which facilitates our weekly continuous enrolment. The teacher is responsible for planning within the scope of a weekly scheme of work. Initial placement of students in classes, the content of the courses, and ongoing assessment are all structured and informed according to the linguistic levels specified by the Common European Framework.

3. Structure of the academic year

The Oxford International YRS timetable runs from 9.00-16.30 for adult classes, and 9.00-18.00 when junior groups are enrolled.

Each academic year consists of 4 terms of roughly equal length (12 or 13 weeks). The syllabus is adapted to fit the length of each term.

Class time periods

Morning classes

These classes include students from several different course types: Morning 20, Intensive 30, and Super-Intensive 40 (15, 22.5, and 30-hour per week courses). We offer General English as well as IELTS exam preparation in the morning classes. Morning classes are always more popular, and have a higher number of classes open than in the afternoons. This means that there are usually one or more classes of each level, especially during peak times.

These follow a course book-based syllabus designed to meet the needs of the students at each CEFR (Common European Framework) level.

Electives

Students who choose to do the Intensive 30 course (22.5 hours of study per week) take an elective course after their morning session (7.5 hours per week). Students who take the Super-Intensive 40 or Afternoon 20 course will take 2 electives per day (15 hours per week).

These are courses that students can choose according to level, interest and availability. Those wishing to focus on core language skills can opt for the Essential Skills electives. These are divided according to level and aim to develop and practise reading, listening, writing and speaking as well as pronunciation.

English for Specific Purposes electives are also offered. Most are designed around a 4-week syllabus, although this may vary depending on the course type, and include but are not limited to:

- English for Journalism
- English for Customer Service
- English for Academic Purposes
- Exam Skills
- 21st-Century Business
- OTE preparation

Non-exam focused electives are project-based courses focusing on real-life skills and functional language and may include a visit to a local business.

4. Virtual Learning Campus

The Oxford International Virtual Learning Campus (OI VLC) helps students track their progress in English and extend their learning beyond the classroom. A weekly academic calendar that shows them what their teacher has planned for every class including pre-class and homework activities for each day of the week. A to-do list section in the app reminds students what they have to do for the next class. The OI VLC gives students more control over their learning. Through very clear graphs and visuals they can see the results of the tests and outcomes of tutorials taken, and therefore keep a good track of their performance and progress. Students can access their assignments and tests on their phone or laptop. Students can also supplement their learning as the OI VLC provides a vast amount of carefully levelled e-learning activities that allows them to practice and reinforce all language skills at their own time and pace.

In addition, students can use the platform to learn about their centre prior to arrival and submit all essential information required by the school before they arrive. They can also access the social programme calendar and enrol or book onto upcoming activities.

5. Measurement of student progress

In the first section of The Academic Framework, it states that all lessons will have clear objectives, be student-centred and have observable outcomes. The observable outcomes are measured on a short-term and long-term basis. Students take progress tests to review skills and systems studied in class and receive fortnightly tutorials which allow teachers and Senior Teachers to discuss progress with individual students and set short-term development goals. Students will also be given the option to take the Oxford Test of English or the OIETC English Language Level Test at the end of their course. Results from these will be analysed and compared to their initial placement test thus providing external verification of student progress. Student progress is therefore constantly monitored on both a short-term and long-term basis throughout the student's study period and students are fully involved in and aware of their progress.

Initial assessment and needs analysis:

All students are assessed when they arrive using an online placement test featuring grammar, and vocabulary questions and a writing exercise. They also receive a face-to-face speaking and listening assessment, which includes a needs analysis.

Both the online test and spoken test documents are placed in the student's academic file and are used for reference by the DoS, Senior Teachers, and class teachers to check that the student is progressing satisfactorily and at a speed that the student is happy with.

Progress measurement during the student's course:

During a student's course, their progress is measured by academic staff in 5 ways:

1. On a day-to-day basis by the teacher in the class
2. In fortnightly tutorials
3. In weekly progress tests
4. Moving levels and the referral system
4. Exit tests

On a day-to-day basis by the teacher in the class: All teachers' lessons have clear objectives and the achievement of these objectives is continually checked by the teacher in a variety of ways during or at the end of the execution of the lesson. Furthermore, the teacher will revise points and objectives of earlier lessons and check again they have been understood throughout a week of lessons.

In fortnightly tutorials: Every two weeks, each student is given a one-to-one tutorial with a Senior Teacher in which they have the opportunity to discuss their own perception of their progress and learning. Students complete a self-assessment and the Senior Teacher listens to their opinions about their progress and learning ability. Together they identify an action point/plan for the next two weeks, setting clear and achievable targets. This is particularly important for students who feel they are not progressing as fast as they would like or would like to work on certain aspects of their studies in their self-assessment. The Senior Teacher may also refer them to Academic Support.

Progress tests: Every week, each class has a written progress test that the students complete relating to the last week of work they have studied. These tests will only cover language systems. Language skills are tested separately; coursebook tasks will be designated in the course syllabus as test content e.g. week 1 Reading and Writing, and week 2 Speaking and Listening. All four skills are tested every 2 weeks with the exact schedule determined by coursebook and syllabus fit. These tests enable the students and teachers to identify any areas in which the students are struggling and work as one element of overall progress monitoring to support teachers in deciding when a student is ready to move up to a class of a higher level.

Moving levels and referral system: Students are moved to a higher level class on recommendation of the teacher with the consensus of the Senior Teacher and Director of Studies. This decision is based on the teacher's ongoing observation of the student in the classroom as well the results of progress tests. In the event that a student does not agree with their assessment, the student may be given a barrier test.

End of course Testing: Students will also be given the option to take the Oxford Test of English or the OIETC English Language Level Test at the end of their course. We may also collect data from other external exams, but this is reliant on students choosing to inform us of their test results.

6. Academic Support

Academic Support is designed to help students who are not progressing as fast as they should, or who feel they need extra work on certain areas of their language learning. It is also there to assist the building of learner awareness and ability to take more responsibility for their own learning.

Students can be referred to Academic Support by their teacher or Senior Teacher, or they can go to Academic Support of their own accord. The Academic Support tutor then structures a series of self-study and extra-curricular learning activities in consultation with the student to achieve the goals the student wants/needs. The Academic Support tutor then monitors the achievement of these goals within Academic Support completing a record on GEL that can be accessed by the student and their teacher(s). Academic support periods are held at different times according to the individual Oxford International school.

7. End of Course reports and Certification

At the end of their course, students receive a certificate of attendance if they have attended a minimum of 80% of their course. Students who study for two weeks or more also receive a personalised report from their teacher which includes an average of all progress tests taken. If a student decides to take the Oxford Test of English or ELLT, they will receive a separate certification.

8. Junior Group Syllabus

Definition of junior student

Junior students are typically 12 – 17 years old and a special syllabus has been designed with the needs of teenage learners in mind. Students aged 16-18 may be placed in adult classes.

Placement testing

At the beginning of their stay, junior students are usually tested using a placement test procedure which incorporates multiple choice grammar questions, a sample of their written work and a brief oral test. The test results inform the student placement and subsequently creation of classes and choice of syllabus materials.

Syllabus lessons

The syllabus consists of two major components: syllabus lessons and culture lessons. Syllabus lessons are available as a set of prepared lessons for elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced levels similar to a course book.

Each syllabus lesson consists of:

- A lesson plan - includes the lesson aim and materials required
- An ideas bank - similar to a teachers' book
- Materials - laminated texts, handouts, cut up sentences, flashcards, prompt cards, etc.
- Workbooks - every student receives a book with all the worksheets for their course in the first lesson. There are four exercise books available for every level and these will be assigned to classes based on placement test results.

For every level there are 2 books available containing 24 lessons which are 90 minutes in length and are based on one of the four skills, grammar or functions.

Student workbook

Junior students receive a Student Workbook which enables them to monitor their learning progress on their short course. The workbook features several components which aim to raise learners' knowledge of how they learn to become more aware and take responsibility for their learning.

In the induction lesson, the students are also encouraged to complete a page called 'English and you'. They then complete an identical one, 'English and you at the end of your course', at the end of their course. These enable the learner to focus on such motivational concepts as the importance of learning English for them, enjoyment of learning English, or the social aspect of learning English. This exercise enables the student to reflect on and evaluate the perceived experiential success of their stay from a more global perspective. It is inspired by a more holistic aspect of learning a language and becoming part of a broader learning community and British culture.

As part of the daily lessons, students are encouraged to record new vocabulary ('New words' section at the end of each book. Students are encouraged to go back to their workbook after they return to their country and keep in touch with their learning. Both sections aim to motivate learners to become more independent and take charge of their own learning journey.

During their last lesson, the learners are encouraged to complete a page that includes different ways they can continue learning English beyond their stay in the UK. This also enables them to become more conscious of how they learn and fosters independence in the learning process.

End-of-course report and certificate of attendance

At the end of their stay students, if requested by the group, receive a personalised report written by their teacher. The report incorporates both qualitative (free written form) and quantitative (Likert-Scale) evaluation keeping in mind parents' varying language ability in English which influences their ability to read their children's reports. They furthermore receive a separate certificate of attendance. If the report is not requested, students receive a certificate of attendance specifying course and level.

As part of their course, students may prepare for and take the OTE for Schools.