

STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE & CURRICULUM POLICY



BRITISH STUDY CENTRES
School of English

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The BSC basic curriculum serves to support teachers and students at the school by describing the work they are to do while here. It deals in detail with levels from A2 to B2, or from Elementary to Upper Intermediate. Advanced students will be catered for in a separate document.

The curriculum consists of the following elements:

1. A statement of educational purpose and guiding principles
2. A description of level and class type
3. A scheme of work
4. Planning and essential activities
5. Evaluation procedures

1. STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.1. OUR AIM – ENGLISH FOR LIFE

Language courses at British Study Centres are planned and delivered to equip students with the language skills they need to achieve their future aspirations. These aspirations may already be envisaged as specific learning goals by the student and/or will be developed through ongoing structured dialogue and investigation (involving the use of tutorials, needs analysis questionnaires and so on) between the student and teacher.

1.2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

British Study Centres manages achievement of the broad aim above through the following guiding principles:

1.2.1. Focus of language learning aims: The learning programme aims to give students the opportunity to improve their ability to use English in order to achieve their future aspirations through the development of language skills, knowledge and attitudes. Teachers break this broad goal down into more specific language learning aims when course planning.

1.2.2. Learning and teaching activities: British Study Centres offers communicatively oriented, highly interactive, learner centred lessons that consist of a sequence of learning activities in a language-rich environment supporting the aims teachers specify when course planning.

1.2.3. Course planning and assessment: The basic unit of planning is the week, in line with our weekly continuous enrolment policy. While the teacher is responsible for planning within the scope of the scheme of work, student needs are assessed through evaluation activities on a weekly basis, and planning adjusted accordingly. Students' progress is recorded at tutorial. Students who have continual problems will be offered appropriate academic support.

1.2.4. Validation of courses against external criteria: Initial placement of students in classes, the content of courses and lessons and ongoing assessment and tutorials are all structured and informed according to the

linguistic levels specified by the Common European Framework. Lessons are planned to help students progress as efficiently as possible in the areas of their identified need within this framework.

1.2.5. Developing learning skills: As part of teaching and ongoing dialogue with students, our courses aim to develop learner motivation and effort and encourage students to take responsibility for their progress and make best use of the study opportunities available to them at British Study Centres and in the UK. This will include encouraging students to use our online Virtual Learning Environment to do extension language exercises, record tutorials and complete other tasks that support them in their stay at each British Study Centres School. This system is available for students to use as soon as they register on a course (pre-arrival), during their course and then for up to 3 months after completing their course.

1.2.6. Catering to diversity: All students are supported whatever their specific learning needs where we are able to make reasonable adjustments to our service.

1.2.7. Benchmarked and appropriate academic resourcing of courses: We recruit teachers with internationally recognised EFL qualifications and use a rigorous recruitment and induction process. Ongoing continuous professional development of teachers focuses on developing all the skills required to deliver to the principles listed in this document, including, identifying students' learning needs, planning structured courses and lessons to address these needs, subject knowledge and skills for developing student motivation and autonomy. Please refer to the separate Training Policy. Sufficient and appropriate resources (books, IT systems and so on) will be provided to support delivery of courses and lessons and aid learners in achieving their learning goals.

1.2.8. Courses developed to meet client and market needs: Please refer to the separate Academic Product Development Statement.

2. LEVEL

There are 6 main levels at BSC, including the Intermediate Plus level, which may not be offered in all circumstances. These levels are used for placement of students in most classes at BSC. These levels are always used for the coursebook classes. There may, however, be some classes which consist of a broader range of students, particularly in the afternoon.

2.1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE LEVELS, RELATED TO THE CEFR

Elementary (Level A2)

In following conversations, students will be able to identify broad outlines and very salient information. In reading will be able to follow the main details of standard/ routine texts and specific and predictable information in them. They will be able to take part in short conversations on basic and familiar topics and be able to write short formulaic notes.

Pre-Intermediate (Level B1.1)

Students will be able to understand the main and important points of straightforward factual speech and texts on everyday issues and familiar topics. Students will be able to communicate using a wide range of simple language with some confidence on familiar routine and a restricted range of non-routine matters. Students will have a clear sense of text as a coherent artifact and be able to write simple personal letters.

Intermediate (Level B1.2)

Students will easily be able to understand straightforward factual information about common everyday issues orally and in written form. Students will be able to identify the general message and specific details when speech is clearly articulated. Students will be able to communicate using a wide range of simple language with some confidence on familiar routine and some non-routine matters both orally and in written form. Students are now willing to take long turns in exchanges though may rely on slow speech and hesitation to maintain fluency. Students are becoming familiar with a wider range of texts.

Intermediate Plus (Level B2.1)

Students will be able to begin to understand conceptually complex speech and lines of argument on both concrete and abstract topics. Students will be able to begin to read with a large degree of independence, handling longer texts, and becoming familiar with a wide variety of text types. They will be able to interact

with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes interaction possible without strain, and begin to be able to convey attitude and emotion in writing.

Upper Intermediate (Level B2.2)

Students will be able to follow the main outlines and many details of conceptually complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics. They will be familiar with most text types regularly encountered in daily life. Students will easily be able to interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes interaction possible without strain and communicate with good (though not perfect) grammatical control. Students will show flexibility and precision in communicating in writing.

Advanced (Level C1/2)

Advanced students are a varied group with widely differing needs. There is normally a class studying towards the Cambridge CAE examination, but there will often be a separate advanced class. Teachers have the widest discretion in planning for these classes.

2.2. HOW TO USE THE DESCRIPTION OF LEVEL

There is a fuller description of the levels, giving a wide range of representative skill and activity types for each level, appended to this document.

The description of level provides a limited description of the kinds of language performance students should be capable of at each level. It should be seen as being a representative rather than an exhaustive description. It is not an inventory of learning points to be acquired by the student before they move on to the next level. It is a profile, or prototype, of the language behaviour expected at each level, describing a linguistic environment of sufficient sophistication and complexity to challenge individual students to learn and improve. The description is organised by skill (Use of English is considered a skill in the sense that the descriptors outline what students can do with the elements of the language).

This account of level provides a reference for the teachers, showing the context in which they are to interpret and apply the scheme of work – the nature, complexity and level of difficulty of tasks, texts and situations. Each skill is described first by a can-do statement related to the CEFR showing the nature of the skill and secondly, by the text types and situations students should be able to handle. Levels of difficulty will be described where necessary. Thirdly, the types of activity and specific language functions that students will undertake will be exemplified.

Teachers should particularly note the breadth of skills and the richness and number of different kinds of language activity which may be done in the classroom at each level.

2.3. PLACEMENT

Students are placed according to the judgement of the Course Manager made on the basis of performance in the three elements of the placement test. Students request a change of class or level by application to the course manager, who will take teachers' views into account in making a decision.

Students move to a higher class on the basis of their teacher's judgement. It is expected that normally students will stay in level for the equivalent of one term. However, we recognise that every student is different. Any decisions not to move a student, or to move early, need to be clearly evidenced.

2.4. CLASS TYPES

Regular classes at BSC are divided into coursebook classes and options. Coursebook classes are for fifteen lessons a week, which may happen in the morning or the afternoon, depending on centre. Options are for five lessons a week, and include speaking and listening (an hour each day). Other options take place in the afternoon on two days a week. These include grammar and writing, wordpower, IELTS preparation (also available as a coursebook class) and business classes. Each has its own syllabus and allocated materials. Options may have broader levels than the coursebook classes, often being organised into lower, mid and upper levels.

3. SCHEMES OF WORK

The scheme of work is the work done and its sequence. For the coursebook classes, it is the course book chosen for the term as tweaked, supplemented and adapted by the teachers teaching at the level in accordance with students' needs. For the optional classes, the scheme of work is organised in the appropriate file in the staff room. Unlike the description of level, the scheme of work does provide a selection of material to be mastered by the students, and therefore should be tweaked by the teacher on the basis of weekly reviews and tests so that it meets defined needs of students. Where there is more than one class at the level, teachers should ensure that they co-ordinate on the broad scheme of work and do not get out of step with the sequence of units.

4. PLANNING AND ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES

While the year is divided into four terms, each with its own range of books, the basic unit of planning is the week. The reason for this is the weekly student intake. Continuous enrolment means that the makeup of classes may change every Tuesday when the new students arrive.

The list of essential activities provides a planning checklist to ensure that teachers provide their students with a balanced timetable over the week. If the essential activities are not being done, then the curriculum is not being properly implemented. The idea is to have as few essential activities as possible so that we don't become too restrictive and prescriptive.

So, in summary:

- a) In weekly plans, teachers need to make sure that a wide range of aims and activities are dealt with. The precise balance will, of course, reflect the needs and priorities of the specific class in question, but plans must be made with the "essential activities" for the class in mind.

Coursebook classes:

- b) For coursebook classes, use the information from Monday morning review activities and tests to help you plan the week.
- c) The coursebook supplies the core scheme of work throughout the term. Use the materials and activities as part of your work for the week, and as a hook to hang your aims on.
- d) Make sure you keep to the same unit of the coursebook as other teachers at the same level as you. This is so that classes can be split and merged as necessary without worrying about students having done the material before.

Optional classes:

- e) For options, consult the syllabuses in the teachers' room. Course descriptions, assigned materials and topic lists are kept by the co-ordinators for each option.
- f) Speaking and listening can be planned on a weekly basis. However, the afternoon options need more care. Our enrolment policy means that the makeup of these classes can change drastically from week to week. It is good practice to plan generally for a four week period to prevent lessons becoming isolated one-offs, but each week should be sufficiently self-contained not to rely on students having been present the week before.
- g) Use the weekly planners. These are available on Bellbird.

Weekly review tests and activities will be based on the scheme of work.

4.1. ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE COURSEBOOK CLASSES

4.1.1. Each student will discuss their progress at least once every six weeks with their teacher in a formal tutorial.

4.1.2. There will be at least one pair or groupwork activity each lesson unless the class are doing an activity such as a class visit or a test which makes this impossible.

4.1.3. Each week:

- Students will do work in each of the four skills at least once.
- Students will have the opportunity to study language systems, including pronunciation, explicitly at least once.
- Students will undertake at least one activity in which learning skills are discussed, and another in which notes are reviewed.
- Students will have an opportunity to evaluate their own progress through a test or other review activity.
- Students will have an opportunity to discuss and comment on the weekly timetable in a class activity.
- Students will do at least three pieces of checked homework.

4.1.4. Each term students will have two opportunities to evaluate their own language level through a formal diagnostic test.

4.1.5. Students will have at least one opportunity each month to develop their English in practice through a planned class trip that is related to current work in class.

Exam classes, speaking and listening and the PM options will have differing essential activities.

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

5.1. TUTORIALS

Tutorials are conducted twice a term – once near the beginning and once near the end. The aim is to give the student an opportunity to discuss their progress with their teacher. The teacher will record progress in each tutorial record for the student saved on our online Virtual Learning Environment. Full details are in the tutorials documentation.

5.2. EXAMS

Exams are currently being developed. They will be held twice a term. The aim is to give students the opportunity to see where they stand against the level descriptors, and to identify any problems. These exams are set centrally, not by the class teacher, constructed by the academic management team from the question bank. Tests are direct, and weighted towards productive skills and use of English. Speaking is not tested for logistical reasons.