

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Pre-Masters Diploma for International Students (PDIS)**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2016**.

This programme aims to provide a bridge to postgraduate study for international students who are non-native speakers of English and whose current qualifications (academic and/or English language) do not meet Royal Holloway's entrance requirements for direct entry. It is a full-time, nine-month programme that runs from the end of September to the following June. The PDIS develops the English language skills, academic knowledge and understanding, and the critical thinking and research skills that will enable students to engage fully with Masters' level work in a variety of disciplines at Royal Holloway.

Specifically, the PDIS aims to enable students to:

- develop the English language and literacy skills needed to perform effectively on a postgraduate degree;
- achieve the knowledge and understanding of an academic subject sufficient for postgraduate studies;
- acquire the study skills and strategies necessary for independent research and for critical engagement with challenging academic topics;
- adjust successfully to the academic and social environment of Royal Holloway;
- develop a clear view of their own capabilities and the postgraduate study opportunities open to them at Royal Holloway.

This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the Royal Holloway prospectus, the Royal Holloway Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival and on the Royal Holloway intranet. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

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Learning outcomes

A. Knowledge and Understanding

On completion of the PDIS students should:

- demonstrate knowledge, understanding and intellectual abilities in their chosen academic field at a level equivalent to third year undergraduate study (NQF Level 6);
- communicate in an academic register of English to a level that enables verbal and written participation in postgraduate degree level work;
- operate successfully in the academic environment of Royal Holloway.

B. Skills and Other Attributes

Completion of the PDIS will enable students to:

- locate, analyze, synthesize and critically evaluate academic sources, both paper-based and electronic*;
- construct evidence-based argument and present this in a coherent and cohesive manner in writing with due acknowledgement of sources*;
- apply a range of skills specific to a specific academic field;
- participate effectively and appropriately in a range of academic settings, including lectures, seminars and workshops*;
- undertake a substantial project involving literature review, primary research and extended academic writing;
- apply a range of study skills, including the ability to organise their studies*;
- make effective use of relevant ICT skills*;
- engage fully in the academic community at Royal Holloway*.

*transferable skills

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Details of the programme structure(s)

Since the PDIS has a dual aim of a) enabling students to enhance their academic knowledge and understanding and b) improving their English language competence, both areas are given equal weighting in the curriculum. Hence, the *English Language and Academic Skills* component of the PDIS accounts for two course units while the academic components (UG Academic Course Unit and Independent Research Project) account for the remaining other two course units. Please see below.

PDIS component	English Language and Academic Skills	Independent Research Project (benchmarked at UG Year 3)	Undergraduate Academic Course Unit
Devised and delivered by	CeDAS	CeDAS and RHUL Academic Department	RHUL Academic Department
Course Unit value	2.0	1.0	1.0
Notional learning hours	600 hrs.	300 hrs.	300 hrs.
Taught hours	100 hrs. seminar group teaching	70 hrs. seminar group teaching	Varies, but typically 60 hrs.
	15 hrs. Small group tutorials and structured independent learning	12 hrs. Small group tutorials and structured independent learning	

	activity	activity	
		8 hrs. 1:1 supervision from academic subject specialist	
Course(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and Writing Skills • Oral Communication Skills • Graduate Skills • Small group tutorials with Personal Tutor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated support course for <i>Independent Research Project</i> • Supervision from an academic supervisor • Small group tutorials with Personal Tutor 	Normally a Year 2 course in the department to which the student is seeking entry.

The PDIS is taught over the three terms of the academic year. During Terms 1 and 2, students participate in a range of English language and academic skills courses at CeDAS, take the equivalent of one undergraduate course unit in an academic department (normally a Year 2 course), begin work on the Independent Research Project (8-10,000 words) and complete the remainder of the summative coursework set for the PDIS. Students are also required to take 3 -4 hours of Academic English support courses per week during this period. Term 3 is devoted to the writing of the Independent Research Project as well as formal examinations in *English Language and Academic Skills* and academic units.

Students receive an hour-long small group tutorial with a Personal Tutor in each week of the programme, which are intended to support the dual aims of the PDIS whilst providing pastoral and other academic support.

All students are expected to engage in around 25 hours of independent study each week.

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Teaching, learning and assessment

The programme components devised and delivered by CeDAS English Language and Academic Skills, and Independent Research Project) develop the skills for postgraduate study through authentic academic tasks of increasing challenge which are 'scaffolded', i.e. students are closely supported but this support diminishes as students acquire skills and become more autonomous. Learning activities include, for example: reading-to-write tasks in which students survey challenging academic texts, identify relevant points, and synthesize these points into a written argument; analysis and discussion of exemplar postgraduate writing followed by tasks in which students apply what they have learnt in their own writing; and group-work activities which require problem-solving, a range of oral communication skills and team-work.

A key focus of the PDIS is the development of independent study skills since this is crucial for postgraduate work. PDIS students learn how to prepare thoroughly for, and make effective use of, lectures and seminars, as well as how to undertake library-based research and primary research employing an appropriate methodology. The Independent Research Project support course guides students to work autonomously and to self-manage the research and writing of the project according to set deadlines, with the support of Personal Tutors.

Assessment is based on the learning outcomes for the three components of the PDIS:

PDIS component	English Language and Academic Skills	Independent Research Project	Undergraduate Academic Course Unit
Assessment tasks	Course work (60%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 essays (10% and 20%) • 1 academic discussion (10%) • 1 individual presentation & 1 group presentation (10% each) Written exam (40%)	8-10,000 word Project	This varies according to RHUL department.

Assessed coursework for the CeDAS components is designed to allow students to monitor their development through the year and also provides them with a strong motivation to learn. All assessed coursework receives detailed feedback which students are encouraged to incorporate in their learning. RHUL's plagiarism detection software, Turnitin, is used for much formative assessment, and for all summative coursework. Unseen written exams are also a key aspect of PDIS assessment, and students are introduced to a range of techniques for preparing for and taking exams in a university setting.

Full details of teaching, learning and assessment for the CeDAS courses can be found in the Course Specifications. As regards the UG Academic Course Unit, details about teaching, learning and assessment can be obtained from the relevant [Department](#).

Progression and award requirements

Students who pass the PDIS will be awarded a *Royal Holloway Pre-Masters Diploma* and a full transcript of their results. A 'Pass' is awarded when a student achieves:

- a final mark no lower than 40% in the English Language and Academic Skills component; and
- a final mark no lower than 40% in the Independent Research Project; and
- a mark of at least 40% in the academic unit or a mark of 40% in both of the two half-course units taken during the PDIS.

The PDIS aims to establish a clearly articulated pathway from Pre-Masters to postgraduate study at RHUL with an agreed set of progression thresholds which make it transparent what PDIS students need to achieve if they are to be guaranteed a place in their postgraduate degree of choice. Agreements on progression have been made on the following basis:

Academic	<p>For PGT programmes with a 2:1 entry level, students need to achieve an overall programme average* of 60.00% on the PDIS, plus a minimum level of 40% in each of the main components of the PDIS (see above);</p> <p>For PGT programmes with a 2:2 entry level, students need to achieve an overall programme average* of 50.00% on the PDIS, plus a minimum level of 40% in each of the main components of the PDIS (see above).</p>
English	For PGT programmes requiring IELTS 6.5 overall , students will need to achieve 50% overall

Language	in the English Language and Academic Skills component of the PDIS. Students seeking entry to programmes with a higher IELTS entry tariff will need to achieve 55% or more (by agreement with the receiving department).
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In addition, some receiving departments have set a further pre-requisite: that students are first approved by the department before they can be accepted onto a pathway with agreed thresholds for progression. This approval is required at the point of application to the PDIS.

*The calculation of the programme average reflects the weighting of the three components of the PDIS, i.e. the English Language and Academic Skills component counts for 50%, and the Independent Research Project and the Undergraduate Academic Course Unit count for 25% each.

A candidate who satisfies both the following criteria will automatically be raised into the next class:

- (a) the Final Average must be within 2.00% of the relevant progression threshold stated above;
- (b) at least four half unit marks must be above the relevant progression threshold.

Grade Conversion Table

UG final averages and classifications		PDIS final averages and outcomes	
70.00% or above	First Class Honours	70.00% or above	Pass
60.00%-69.99%	Upper Second Class Honours	60.00%-69.99%	
50.00%-59.99%	Lower Second Class Honours	50.00%-59.99%	
40.00%-49.99%	Third Class Honours	40.00%-49.99%	
35.00%-39.99%	Pass	35.00%-39.99%	Fail
0.00%-34.99%	Fail	0.00%-34.99%	

CeDAS currently has progression agreements with key departments for the postgraduate degree courses listed below. Full details of relevant progression tariffs are available here:

<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/international/englishlanguage/premasters/home.aspx>

Should departments wish to add further programmes to the list on this page, these will be included after annual reviews.

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Student support and guidance

- Small group tutorials for one hour per week with a Personal Tutor where issues of an academic or pastoral nature may be discussed;
- A total of 8 hours per student of supervision across the three terms with an Academic Supervisor regarding the Independent Research Project;
- Programme of orientation to the local environment and academic services;
- Representation on departmental Student-Staff Committee;
- Detailed PDIS Student Handbook;
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources on Moodle and in RHUL library, departmental Student Resources and intranet;
- Access to all RHUL support services, including Student Counselling Service, Careers' Service, Health Centre and Disability and Dyslexia Service (ESO).

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Admission requirements

For details of admissions requirements please refer to the [Course Finder](#)

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Further learning and career opportunities

The PDIS provides the opportunity for non-native speakers of English to develop the English skills necessary for postgraduate study and research. The postgraduate study then contributes to career development.

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Indicators of quality and standards

Departmental systems for monitoring and assessing quality include individual course evaluations, programme evaluation, Student-Staff Committee, peer evaluation of teaching, the monitoring of curricula provision through the departmental Teaching and Learning committee and an annual review report, including a report from a Visiting Examiner.

Staff teaching on the PDIS hold relevant teaching qualifications at Diploma level or above, postgraduate degrees and are experienced in teaching English for Academic Purposes in Higher Education. The PDIS is validated by Royal Holloway, University of London.

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List of programme

The PDIS is taught by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and leads to the award of a Royal Holloway Pre-Masters Diploma. The Banner programme code is given in parentheses.

Pre-Masters Diploma for International Students (2941)

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