The University Of Sheffield.

Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from The University of Sheffield

Programme Details

1. Programme title	Biological Sciences with Foundation Year
2. Programme code	BISU17
3. QAA FHEQ level	Final Qualification at FHEQ Level 6 – **this programme specification relates solely to the Foundation Year delivery at University of Sheffield Undergraduate Foundation Level 0** (broadly equivalent to FHEQ levels 2-3), which guarantees progression to University of Sheffield Undergraduate Level 1 (FHEQ Level 4) at the agreed mark threshold as set out in the Programme Regulations.
4. Faculty	Science
5. Department	School of Biosciences
6. Other departments providing credit bearing modules for the programme	Not applicable
7. Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	None
8. Date of production/revision	March 2023

Awards	Type of award	Duration
9. Final award	See 3 above	1 year
10. Intermediate awards	Students who pass the Foundation Year at Level 0, but do not achieve the specified progression threshold or meet additional specified conditions, will be entitled to the award of a Higher Education Achievement Record documenting and explaining their achievements on the Foundation Year. They would also be entitled to transfer onto any appropriate Certificate in Higher Education offered by the Department of Lifelong Learning at the University of Sheffield.	

Programme Codes

11. JACS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HESA website.*	C100		
12. HECoS code(s) *Select between one and three codes from the HECoS vocabulary.*	100346		

Programme Delivery

13. Mode of study	Full-time
14. Mode of delivery	Face to Face

15. Background to the programme and subject area

Biological Sciences, the "Science of Life", is concerned with understanding the diversity of life at its many different levels of organisation. The study of biology has led to an understanding of the natural world and our impact on it and has been central to many advances in modern medicine. Biology is becoming increasingly relevant to modern society as it seeks to address the important issues of the 21st century, including global climate change, pollution, wildlife conservation, genetically modified organisms, cloning and disease outbreaks. Because Biology is such a large subject, it is divided into modules based on either the type of organisms studied (animal, plant or microorganism) or the level of organisation studied (biochemical, molecular, cellular, genetic, physiological or ecological).

The BSc Biological Sciences with Foundation Year at the University of Sheffield provides students with non-standard entry qualifications with a thorough and supportive academic preparation for successful degree level study. The programme is carefully designed to build confidence in students' abilities, develop essential academic and study skills, and provide the subject specific knowledge essential for success.

We work closely with students to ensure that their chosen degree is the most appropriate one for them, offering a range of stimulating learning opportunities through which to explore the different career and study opportunities open to them, and introducing them to all the learning and assessment methods they are most likely to encounter during their degree.

The foundation year is taught within the Department for Lifelong Learning, where we have over forty years' experience working with adult learners to unlock their potential to succeed through the offer of accessible foundation courses leading to full- and part-time degree level study. Students will learn alongside other students studying for a number of different degrees, typically in small class-sizes, supporting one another to develop and succeed. This foundation year also includes a range of opportunities to become involved in the life of the School of Biosciences, to which students will progress following successful completion of their foundation year with an overall grade of 65 or above, including a mark of 70 or above in the Extended Project module (ACE0349), and 65 or above in core science modules (ACE0354, ACE0356 and ACE0357) and the Maths module (ACE0345). These will include having their Extended Project supervised within the School, and visits arranged by DLL.

The University of Sheffield prides itself on the preparedness of all its graduates to excel in the world of work, developing a wide range of skills which can be applied in whatever career students ultimately choose to pursue. On the Foundation Year, students will be introduced to the full range of attributes of the Sheffield Graduate, in readiness for a successful and enjoyable undergraduate career.

16. Programme aims

The BSc and MBiolSci Biological Sciences Programmes aim to:	
A1	Provide students with subject based knowledge and skills of the required standard for a successful undergraduate career at the University of Sheffield.
A2	Develop students' familiarity with different methods of learning, teaching and assessment employed at the University of Sheffield.
A3	Build students' confidence in their academic ability and to develop understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses.
A4	Develop students' ability to exploit their knowledge and skills in new situations.
A5	Increase students' awareness of the opportunities as well as the challenges of studying as an undergraduate student.
A6	Provide strategies for managing the conflicting demands placed upon mature students.
A7	Provide information and guidance relating to students' chosen degree programme.
A8	Develop students' awareness of the key attributes of the Sheffield Graduate.
A9	Encourage students' enthusiasm and motivation for future degree level study.

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:		
		Links to Aim(s)
K1	Academic English of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.	A1-A9
K2	Biology, Chemistry and the Natural Sciences sufficient for successful progression to Level 1 in BSc Biological Sciences.	A1-A9
K3	Mathematics and descriptive statistics of a standard necessary for successful progression to Level 1 HE study.	A1-A9
K4	The opportunities and the demands placed on students by university-style methods of learning, teaching and assessment.	A1-A9
K5	Knowledge of personal study strengths and weaknesses.	A1-A9
Skills and other attributes On successful completion of the programme, students will be able to:		
S1	Acquire, evaluate and use subject-related information in different circumstances.	A1-A9
S2	Demonstrate skills in oral and written communication that enable study at Level 1.	A1-A9

S3	Demonstrate skills in problem-solving and presenting ideas sufficient to develop and sustain a coherent line of argument.	A1-A9
S4	Participate effectively in group work activities, both assessed and non-assessed.	A1-A9
S5	Carry out independent study and small-scale research.	A1-A9
S6	Perform basic techniques of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.	A1-A9
S7	Demonstrate information literacy skills sufficient for effective study at Level 1.	A1-A9
S8	Use reflective learning skills that promote self-awareness and appropriate responses to feedback.	A1-A9

18. Learning and teaching methods

1. **Lectures and seminars.** Most modules rely largely upon a mixed lecture/seminar format in order to impart essential subject knowledge, build confidence and encourage individual student participation. The latter is achieved through regular question and answer sessions and the use of small-group work to stimulate discussion on particular issues. The balance between tutor- and student-led discussions varies from subject area to subject area.

2. **Problem solving classes.** These are an integral part of the Maths and Statistics module, allowing students to develop their problem-solving skills with individual support from tutors where necessary. The work carried out in these classes allows students to apply and practice their theoretical knowledge, as well as their examination technique, in a supportive environment.

3. **Field studies.** Short field study trips to specific landscapes, places or buildings (e.g. museums) are employed in modules in order to introduce particular concepts, ideas and techniques best understood in context. These also provide an opportunity to practice basic recording methods in some instances.

4. **Independent study.** This is the most important part of the learning process for most Foundation Year students. The extent to which independent study is formally guided by the tutor through the setting of specific weekly "private study tasks" will vary from subject area to subject area. In many science-based subjects, for example, formal or informal question papers and tasks may be set on a regular basis. In other subjects, the emphasis will be more upon the location, reading and analysis of suitable primary or secondary sources, often in preparation for particular formally assessed essay questions or projects. All students take a core Extended Project module which specifically develops their independent study and research skills. Within this and the Academic Literacy and Communication Skills module, students are also encouraged to monitor and reflect on their learning and performance in a number of different contexts.

5. **Skills and subject-based tutorials**. These are provided as part of the core Extended Project and Academic Literacy and Communication Skills modules. All students are also assigned a personal tutor for the duration of their studies on the Foundation Year with whom they are encouraged to discuss their progress and degree choice.

6. **Group work**. Throughout the Foundation Year students are encouraged to work together and support one another both within and outside the classroom – sharing knowledge and experience in a creative way in order to develop support networks during their time on the Foundation Year which they can continue to draw upon in their future degree level studies.

7. **On-line activities**. All Foundation Year modules make use of Blackboard courses to develop familiarity with the use and potential of virtual learning environments to enhance and structure learning, and as a tool for effective communication.

8. **Revision workshops**. All those modules which include substantial summative assessment by

formal written examination will include specific workshops tailored to prepare students for this particular form of assessment. This is an area of assessment which mature students often find particularly challenging but is also a key assessment tool used at level one and above on most degree pathways.

9. **Laboratory sessions**. Biology and Chemistry modules include some laboratory classes in which students will practice basic laboratory procedures, skills and techniques, whilst exploring their understanding of subject knowledge through experiment and observation. The Extended Project Module enables students on this pathway to understand the design of simple laboratory experiments developing self-directed research and analysis skills.

19. Assessment and feedback methods

The assessment on the foundation year of the BSc Biological Sciences with Foundation Year is designed to provide experience of all key forms of assessment methods which students are likely to encounter at higher levels of study. Early exposure to these different assessment methods, including formative assessments in "Foundations of" modules, as well as the opportunities provided through feedback and tutorial discussion to reflect on these experiences, helps build students' confidence in their ability to succeed, and to identify strategies for future success.

The assessment methods employed are as follows:

1. Essays and Reports. Modules within the programme require either the preparation of an essay or a report. In preparing for and writing these, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1, K3, S1-3, S5 and S7.

2. Oral or poster presentations. Individual and group presentations, supported by Powerpoint or posters, are assessed as part of the core Academic Literacy and Introduction to the Natural Sciences modules respectively. They provide an important opportunity for students to demonstrate to their peers their achievement of all learning outcomes.

3. Reflection exercises: these exercises can take various forms (e.g. learning journal, feedback action planning, critical reflection on individual extended essay/project) and are an important element of the Academic Literacy and Extended Project modules. They provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1, K3-5, S1-8.

*4. Unseen examinations***:** End of module examinations are an integral part of all 'Foundations of …' and the Introduction to the Natural Sciences module. In preparing for and sitting examinations, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of K1-3, S1-3 and S6.

5. On-line participation: a small number of modules formally assess students' participation in virtual learning environment activities. This provides the opportunity to develop K1-5 while demonstrating S2, S4 and S7-8.

6. Extended project. The core extended project module gives all students the opportunity to develop their independent research and communications skills, whilst further exploring subject matter relevant to a Biological Sciences degree in more depth. The successful completion of this module enables students to demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes.

20. Programme structure and student development

The programme is modular. Students gain subject knowledge and practical, communication and data skills. These are applied in the capstone extended project. Personal tutors are available to discuss the best module options to take to best support successful progression to the BSc Biological Sciences.

Our Foundation Years are carefully designed to ease transition back into study for people who have often not studied in a formal academic environment for a long period of time. In this respect, the key subject matter and assessments students encounter in the first semester are intended to introduce and refresh key study skills and practices, to build confidence, but also to open up their thinking to the

wider field of learning and knowledge which is the life blood of any University degree. We also place a strong emphasis on group and peer-assisted learning at this stage, through the inclusion of different group tasks and assessments which are designed to ensure students can share and develop skills and support networks together which will serve them well throughout their University career.

As the year progresses, the nature of the challenges we present intensify, with an increasing emphasis placed on those forms of assessment which mature students often find most rewarding (more in-depth project work) or most difficult (end of year exams). Through the project work, departmental visits and other means, we also create a range of opportunities to become increasingly engaged in the life of the School of Biosciences. In this way, we aim to ease students' second critical point of transition from foundation year student attached to Department for Lifelong Learning to a successful undergraduate student ready to flourish in their new departmental home.

Before the end of the year's study, all students are offered clear advice and guidance around progression options from Foundation Level to Level One, including appropriate careers advice, and through their final pieces of assessment in the Academic Literacy and Project modules, are encouraged to reflect carefully upon their learning over the course of their foundation year, and their preparedness for level one study.

In the case of students who do not achieve the average grade of 65 or better in their Foundation Year, plus additional conditions, required to progress onto level one of the BSc Biological Sciences, we provide in depth support, advice and guidance to help them pursue an alternative progression route, either through the Department for Lifelong Learning's own Certificates of Higher Education, or by applying for other degree level study at Sheffield or elsewhere.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available online at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar/.

21. Criteria for admission to the programme

All applicants must meet the University of Sheffield's minimum academic entry requirements for English Language (normally demonstrated by GCSE grade C or equivalent). A minimum GCSE grade D in Mathematics (or equivalent) is required. In addition, successful applicants will be able to demonstrate evidence of:

- Potential to succeed on their chosen degree programme, evidenced by a combination of work, life-based and prior educational experience, including the ability to reflect on their prior experience and how this has equipped them for degree level study;
- Understanding and commitment to the subject-area of their chosen degree programme;
- Preparedness for the demands that undergraduate degree level study will place upon them.

Further information regarding admission to the programme is available from the Department for Lifelong Learning website at https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/dll/courses/foundation-year-degrees.

22. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Subject Benchmark Statements
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014)
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf

University Vision and Strategic Plan
https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision

23. Additional information

For an overview of the structure and regulations which apply to subsequent levels of study, please refer to the degree programme specification for BISU16 BSc Biological Sciences
http://www.shef.ac.uk/calendar/progspec/APS

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid.