How to Survive & Thrive on the British Education System

How it’s different from your classes in the U.S.

- Big lectures and small seminars are often the class format
- Different grading scale
- Less class time
- Most exams are written
- Grade is often based on a single assessment
- The professors and overall feel of the University is usually more formal
- Students often take school more seriously abroad than in the U.S.
- Students often dress nicer for class than they do here in California
- Students don’t bring laptops to class often

Less support from your professors

- Office hours are usually by appointment only.
- Visit the Department office ASAP

Syllabus

- In many countries, the professors don’t follow the syllabus as closely as in the U.S.
- In most cases, there is very little specificity on the syllabus. It is unlikely you will be told which chapters of your textbooks to read each week (for example).

Exams

- Ask what format the exam/paper should be submitted in
- Professors probably won’t review the exam in class.
- Often there is no class the week before an exam.
- The essay questions are sometimes provided in the module.
- Most exams are essay format.
- Any citation method is usually ok.
- Re-writes or retakes are usually available (make sure you ask about this at the BEGINNING of school).
- Sometimes you are assigned a serial number for your exams

Grading System

- In most countries it is nearly impossible to achieve the highest mark (100 percent).
- Learn the grading system & be prepared to receive marks that are lower than you are used to.
- USAC and IP will grade you on a curve in many cases (they take the host country’s grading system into account when compiling your transcript). Ask alumni of your program for more information.

How to succeed

- Go to class. Even though it’s usually not required, it is necessary to do so in order to do well.
- Read, read, read.
- Make friends with local students. Follow their lead and model their study habits.
- Don’t just study with your American friends. Form a study group with the local students if possible.
- Let your professors know that you’re an exchange student.
- Pace yourself. Don’t procrastinate. Last minute cramming isn’t possible on the British education system.
- Demonstrate patience in groups. There is a different cultural dynamic at play.
- Communicate early with your resident director and/or professor if you’re having a problem.
- Plagiarism is taken very seriously in most countries. You cannot even use your own prior work.

"Making friends with the British students helped me to succeed in my classes"
-Daniel Yee
Brighton, England
Alumnus