

Liberal foundations: what does every first-year undergraduate need to know (how to do)?

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LIBERAL FOUNDATIONS: THE FIRST YEAR CORE

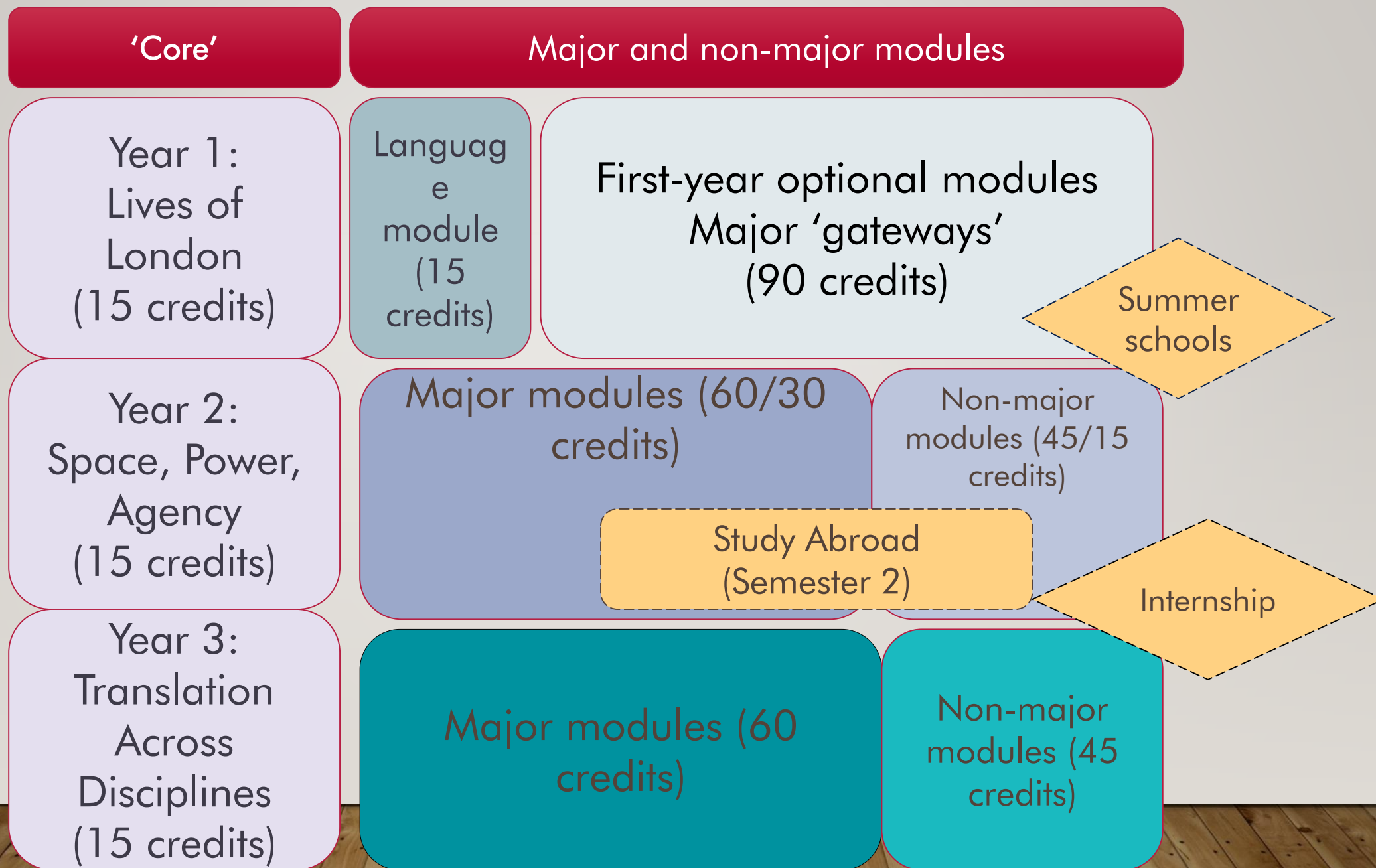
- Skills vs content
- Flexibility/choice vs structure
- 'Generic'/cross-disciplinary vs discipline-specific (interdisciplinarity?)
- King's College London Vision 2029 & Education Strategy 2017-2022
- Erasmus+ strategic partnership bid: 'Creating Responsive Engaging And Tailored Education with Students' (CREATES)
- 'Making New: The Creative and the Critical in Initial Encounters with Early English'

LIBERAL ARTS AT KING'S



- Flexible and interdisciplinary BA programme, started 2012-13, rapid growth (c.30 intake to c.100 intake)
- Currently have 260 enrolled students (c.30% international)
- Students tailor their individual pathway from wide range of modules in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
- Majors (and non-major optional modules) available in: Classics, Comparative Literature, Digital Culture, English, Film, French, Geography, German, History, Music, Philosophy, Politics, Spanish, Portuguese, Theology and Religious Studies

Current



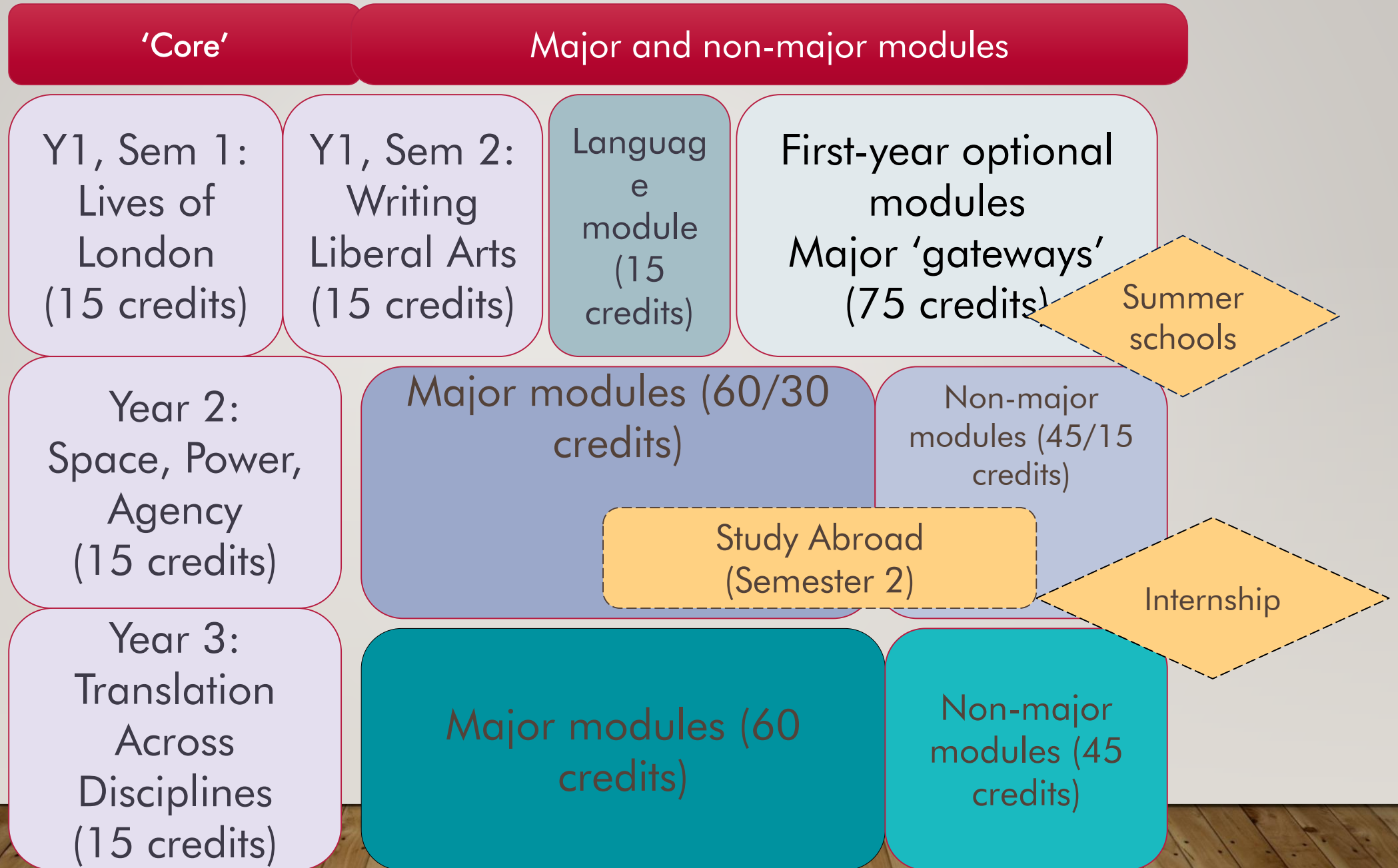
CHALLENGES

- Diverse prior experience of LA cohort & expectations of university study – supporting transition
- Student cohort dispersed & fragmented – community? engagement?
- Innovative elements e.g. trips hard to scale (30 > 100 students)
- Lack of support with study skills, especially academic writing – not enough feedback, diverse & changing expectations in various departments (not always explicit) – (BUT don't want 'skills module')
- Staff turnover/lack of continuity vs. LONG lead time for compulsory module changes

CHALLENGES

- Foundation for Y2 & Y3: needs to build to independent & interdisciplinary individual & group work (BUT don't want Y1 module solely *about* interdisciplinarity)
- Clash between fixed & excessive literary-historical module content ('great books'/'core curriculum' element) & diverse student interests – 'too historical' 'too-wide-ranging' 'can't keep up with reading'
- Current module unaligned – mismatch between content/delivery (lecture-seminar with set content) & assessment (enquiry-based e.g. 'explain the significance of a London object of your choice')

New



CORE CURRICULUM DESIGN

Skills & attributes

Principles

- Interdisciplinary
- Connected/coherent/synthetic
- Curiosity-/enquiry-driven
- With support & guidance
- Research-based & 'real-world'

- Team working & communication
- Critical thinking; problem-solving
- Study/research/digital skills
- Social engagement ('service')
- 'Intellectual & cultural agility'

Approaches

- Small-group teaching
- Group work/peer feedback
- Co-creation/empowerment
- Diverse assessment, incl. e-learning

Content

- Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences
- Research expertise/interests of academic staff & students
- Praxis of interdisciplinarity
 - London

MODULE DESIGN & DELIVERY

- Flexible 'birdcage' modules to be populated annually with content on changing interdisciplinary themes to meet shared learning outcomes: convenor lectures & co-ordinates; tutors give seminars, set questions/problems and reading lists, and supervise group project meetings & workshops
- Small group teaching by multidisciplinary teaching team who are also Liberal Arts personal tutors (focused and engaged core team = community)
- Engagement with city's cultural, social, and historical institutions, spaces, and resources



YEAR 1, SEMESTER I: LIVES OF LONDON

Educational aims:

- To use London as a laboratory for the introductory study of Liberal Arts
- To provide opportunity for students to develop a foundational understanding of skills and methods for multidisciplinary study, research, and enquiry (including team-working and communication skills) and to apply these



'London village' by Andy Gocher

YEAR 1, SEMESTER I: LIVES OF LONDON

- Engagement with city's cultural, social, and historical institutions and spaces – mostly group-based with one tutor-led trip
- Enquiry-based & responsive: student-led investigation based on set prompts and reading suggestions
- Shift from individual assessment to group project work (inclusive classroom community)
- Open, interdisciplinary questions - supported engagement between & across disciplines (building to Y2 & Y3)
- Sharper focus chronologically and thematically (narrow content, expand skills)
- Digital literacy (e-portfolio), team working, & verbal communication/presentation

YEAR 1, SEMESTER 2: WRITING LIBERAL ARTS

Educational aims:

- To use writing as lens through which students will learn about an interdisciplinary topic in the Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences (several themes will be offered as options, led by tutors with specialist expertise in these areas: these may change annually)
- To provide opportunity for students to improve their writing skills and develop as effective, confident, and creative academic writers
- To enable students to develop their abilities to adapt their writing flexibly to different contexts and audiences

YEAR 1, SEMESTER 2: WRITING LIBERAL ARTS



- Five interdisciplinary themes will be offered as options, students engage in reading and writing activities, led by tutors (themes can change annually with tutor availability e.g. 'memory') – students can choose (timetabling!)
- Writing & (tutor & peer) formative feedback intensive – assessment & feedback literacy
- Visiting lecturers: professional novelists & cross-over academics

KEY ENABLERS

- Academic staffing (small-group teaching in multidisciplinary teams)
 - Liberal Arts Early Career Development Fellows (core teaching; academic advising; 40% research time; mentoring & career development)
- Professional services support (module & assessment administration, logistics, communication)
- Institutional education strategy
 - Transformative First Year; service; co-creation; e-learning; learning spaces